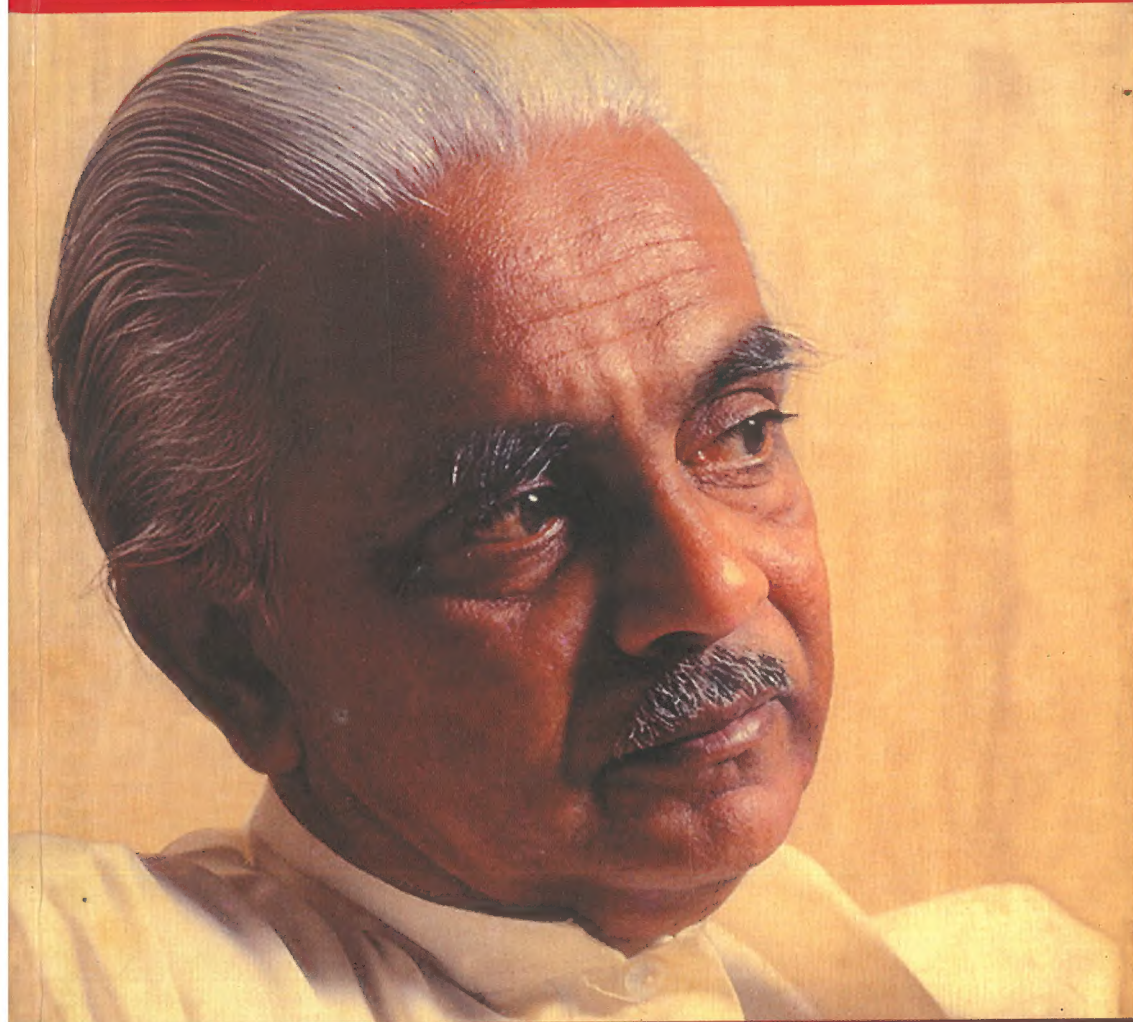


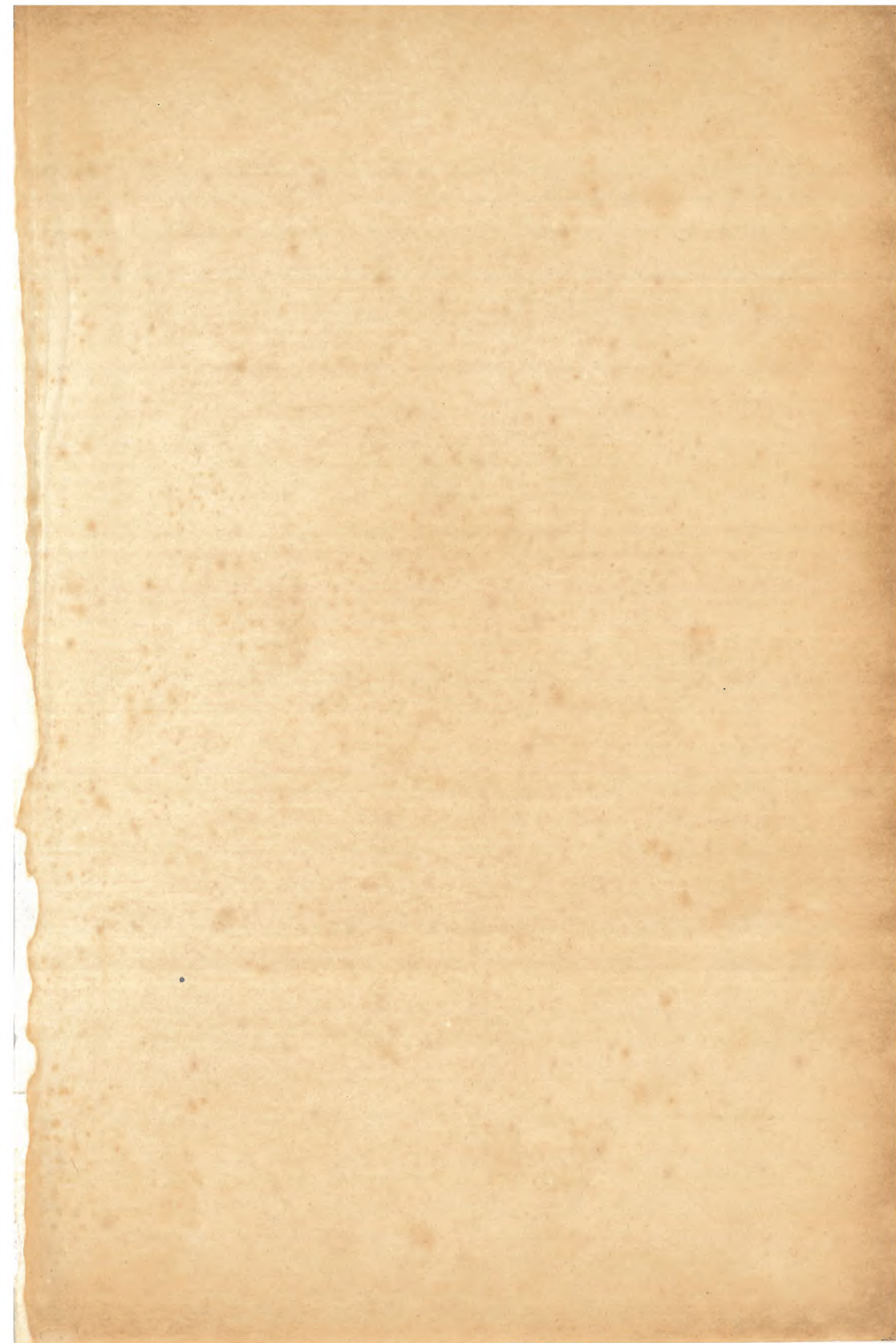
A. T. Ariyaratne

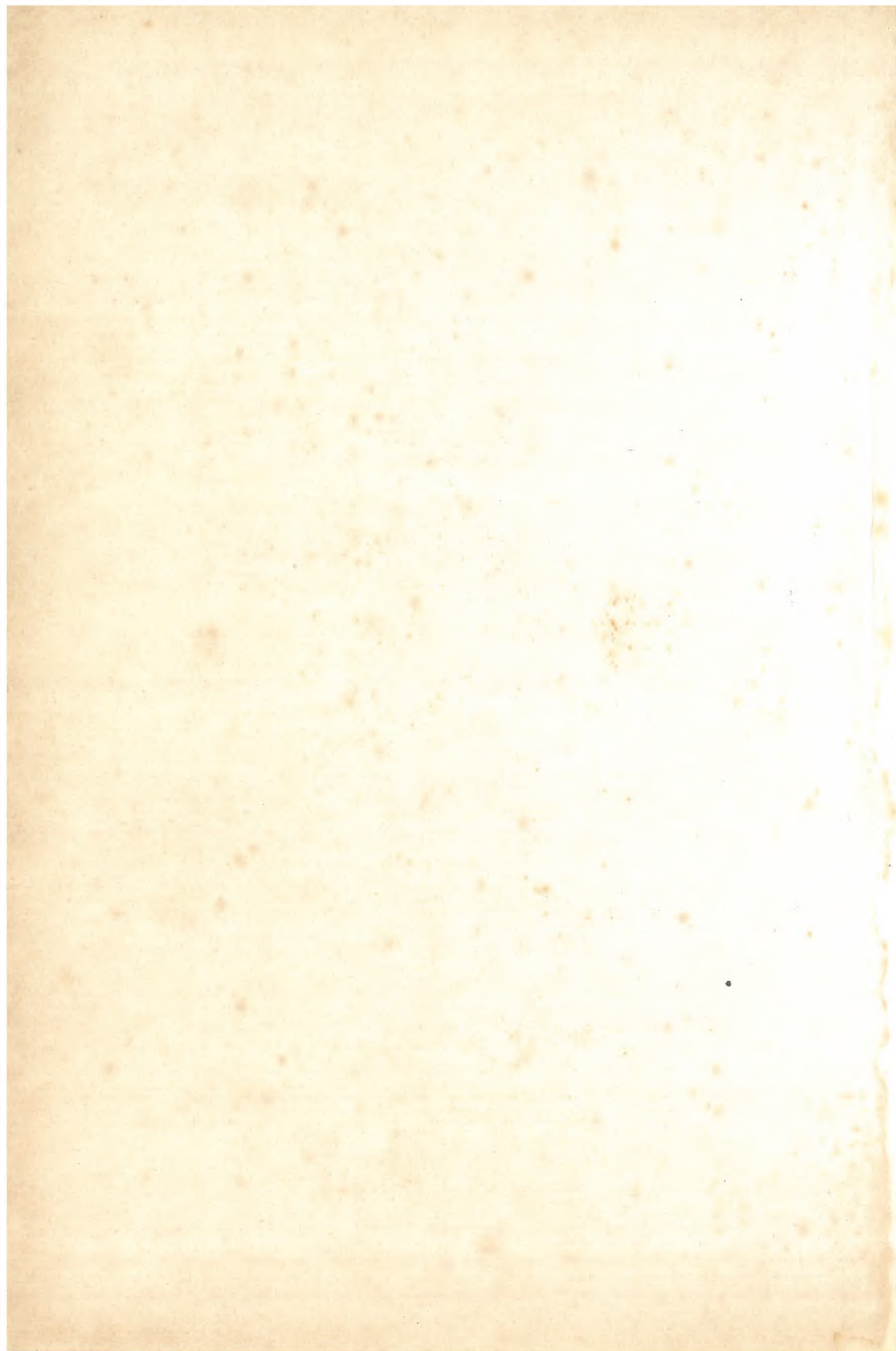


BHAVA THANHA

Vol. 1

An Autobiography





Bhava Thanha

An Autobiography

Volume : 1
(1931-1972)

A.T. Ariyaratne

This autobiography written by Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne comprises an accumulation of daily entries made by the writer plus other miscellaneous writings by him. According to the author, to craft a biography out of this corpus has been an arduous task. So he presents this work to the reader to facilitate understanding other than those gleaned from other works by him and on him.

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, who traversed all the five continents to disseminate the message of Sarvodaya, maintained almost daily entries on and of these travels making his notes in airplanes, airports, hotels etc. His writings convey a fascinating intertwining of the past and the present.

This is the first volume of Bhava Thanha. Four other volumes will be published in the near future.

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BHAVA THANHA

An Autobiography

Volume : 1
(1931-1972)

A.T. Ariyaratne



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I dedicate the First Volume of Bhava Thanha –
My Autobiography – to the illustrious name of
Mrs. Sirimavo R.D. Bandaranaike
who was a blessing to the Sarvodaya Movement for
four decades continuously.

* Hon. Prime Minister late Mrs. Sirimavo R.D. Bandaranaike graced the Fourth Sarvodaya National Award Ceremony, held at Vishva Samadhi Hall on 29th June 1995, as the Chief Guest, in spite of her weak health condition.

Photo: *Priyantha Colombage*

Foreword

I commenced writing this autobiography on April 6, 1976, exactly 24 years ago. During this time many well-known writers had penned many stories which dealt with my life. The pioneer in this field was Gunadasa Liyanage. His biography of me called *Del Gaha Yata Gedera Viplavaya (The Revolution Under the Breadfruit Tree)* saw the light of print in August 1978 with its enlarged edition following in 1987.

The Revolution under the Breadfruit Tree has since been translated into English, Japanese and Tamil. It was written using data collected by the author himself though I never hesitated to oblige him with the necessary information when asked. In fact I made available to him the memoirs I had written on my foreign trips especially during the leisure time provided during long air flights.

Lal Premnath De Mel brought out a book on my childhood entitled *Aluth Para (New Road)* in November 1983. Its second print appeared in 1982. His *Yuga Purushayekuge Kathava* or *The Story of an Epochal Man* was published in July 1997. It was also in 1997 that Premil Ratnayake published his *Apostle of Peace*, again a biography of me, this time in English.

Anjali Pranama was the name given to the respective compilations done first by Professor Nandasena Ratnapala on my 50th birthday and then by Professor Ediriweera Sarachchandra on my 60th birthday. Writers from all over the world acquainted with my work contributed articles to these compilations. Supplementing these works are writings about me and my work with comments and opinions by the authors that have appeared in several countries in various languages.

Some of these writers have eulogised me, and yet others have tainted my name. Praise along with insult I have discerned in

these. Truth has been manifest in some of them along with false content in others. In the spirit of equanimity, I bestow merit on all those who have thus written about me – irrespective of the above distinctions.

This book is actually a condensed compilation of my diary entries made daily and other stray records kept by me that run to about 10,000 pages. To encapsulate all this voluminous material in a character sketch proved an onerous task. Hence those keen to learn more deeply about my life and my ideas may find books and documents written by me useful. Perhaps they would find the content matter in those writings to be of pragmatic value in their day to day life as well.

I must dwell in a slight measure on the style adopted by me in writing this autobiography.

I have visited all the five continents to disseminate the Sarvodaya philosophy. And on these visits whenever I found the leisure, while in those countries or up in the air, I recorded accounts of these visits. And as I wrote, I could not help interspersing them with sequences of reminiscences of my life since my birth. Hence the literary result has been a saga that runs back and forth from the present to the past and from the past to the present. And when the present and the past meet at some juncture, what happens? My story ends.

A. T. Ariyaratne

Vishva Niketan
Rawathawatte,
Moratuwa, Sri Lanka.
2000 November 5

Introduction

Reading "Bhava Thanha," the autobiography by A.T. Ariyaratne, has been a vivid experience for me. That this account of his life has been written by himself distinguishes it from writings on him by others. He has named this autobiography of his, "Bhava Thanha."

In Dr. Ariyaratne's own words, he tells us: "This is Bhava Thanha. This means "a thirst for becoming" or, in other words, "a thirst to have others know about me." I am not ashamed of this thirst or greed as I have not yet been able to conquer "klesa" (worldly defilements). The reader may be able to glean something useful even in a writing launched with such a motive. Further the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in which I have invested a major part of my mental, verbal and physical energies may be able to benefit from this work."

Dr. Ariyaratne has decided only to write what is useful for us. Hence his autobiography narrates how he faced life's problems that he encountered and the ways in which he solved them. He analyses these solutions and in most instances connects the Sarvodaya philosophy to these outcomes.

No other source can surpass this work as a study of Dr. Ariyaratne's life. He traces his childhood with a focus on how the Buddhist temple influenced his growth at this stage of his life. His learning in the village had been primarily with the chief incumbent of the temple. This monk played the role of a university teacher in the village. The characters of the village portrayed by Dr. Ariyaratne really metamorphose before us as actual living beings. How his personality got fashioned by association with these characters is articulated very well throughout this work.

The narrative begins with an account of the time he spent in Puerto Rico in 1976. Even the verses he sent from there are included. The account of the people he met there and his experi-

ences make lively reading. A social service worker he met expressed to him the idea that the basic step to a country's progress is achieving self-sufficiency in food. We see one of the fundamentals of Sarvodaya philosophy creeping into him at this early juncture.

"The splendour of the central mountainous terrain', which is a description of his childhood journey to Meddekande off Balangoda, describes the Sarvodaya leader as a fervent nature lover. The basic foundation of his education was laid here.

"The teacher-pupil relationship was not limited to the classroom, books or formal learning situations. It was most manifest in extra-curricular activities. The volley ball ground, the venues of dancing, singing and playing instruments, the long treks by foot – some 5 to 15 miles – to far-off places like Balangoda, Rassagala and Opanayake, cultivating chenas and vegetable plots, building a lavatory of wattle and daub behind the headmaster's house, digging of wells ... all these became our learning situations."

I feel that these experiences contributed to the making of the Sarvodaya educational philosophy. For Ariyaratne, education went beyond mere book knowledge and encompassed the deep understanding of the whole process of life.

His school book list at that time included texts like *Lokopakaraya*, *Ummagga Jathaka*, *Subhashitaya*, *New Method Reader*. Supplementing these, in the Meddekande temple he read books like the *Selalihini*, *Gira* and *Thisara* sandeshas and verse and prose works of old such as *Kusadakava*, *Guttilaya*, *Dahamsonda Kava*, *Poojavaliya*, *Saddhammaratnavaliya*, *Butsarana* and *Kavyasekeraya* nourished his education further. Even today we cannot underestimate the role these books play in inculcating an intensive education in one. The basis had been laid by these books for a good English education as well.

Dr. Ariyaratne's work is a fine reflection on contemporary society. This is a verse from an advertisement for "thalaguli" which is a Sri Lankan sweet. It displays the modern use of poetry to sell products:

*Loved one, without any hesitance
Partake of Jinadasage thalaguli
It whets your appetite
And is delicious and so nourishing*

Humour runs throughout this book. This is how Dr. Ariyaratne's fun-loving aiya (brother) informs a friend of his cow giving birth to a calf:

*"Your Mrs. keppee that had a tummy like a barrel
Gave birth to a daughter yesterday
Tail white, tummy huge, just like you
Come and see your daughter. "*

The education Ariyaratne received at Mahinda College had been another cornerstone in his life. How this college had influenced him and the processes of education in it are given in detailed. A considerable account is also presented on his student colleagues.

Next Ariyaratne describes his attempts to ward off economic exploitation of workers by galvanising coir workers into collective action. We get glimpses of his vision of a national leadership minus party politics through this experience.

Then he became a teacher at Buona Vista from where he entered the Maharagama Teachers College for training. All the ideas on which Sarvodaya is based seem to have been crystallised here. He gives attention here to a singular incident of lambasting a trainee (whom he held in esteem as a sister) for gifting a certain book to him.

After his teacher-training he joined Nalanda College. The Kanatholuwa Shramadana camp, the founding experience of Sarvodaya, was orchestrated during this period.

Ariyaratne's marriage also took place at this time. The account is endearing to the reader. This is the advice he gets from Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha at the threshold of his marriage:

"When two people live together, they can flare up. But only one person should get angry at one time. The other has to be patient." The other piece of advice was about suspicion. "When you live together do not believe even your own eyes and ears. That is implicit trust."

Ariyaratne's greatest luck was finding a spouse of exemplary ways .

The Kantholuwa camp was followed by camps at Malambe, Deniyaya, Pallegama, and Wathurawa.

His encounter with Acharya Vinoba Bhave was also a life-changing event. Having witnessed the Bhoodan, Gramadan, Sampattidan, Jeevandan and Shanthi Sena movements of Vinoba Bhave, Ariyaratne endeavoured to model his Sarvodaya movement on them.

The resolution made at a meeting in Anuradhapura was very significant for Ariyaratne as well. He describes it in the following way:

"We, workers of Sarvodaya shall strive to establish a social order that has as its hallmarks the entrenchment of the optimum development of humans, acceptance of the axioms of truth, compassion, and selflessness and exclusion of any kind of oppression."

Ariyaratne was a fighter. In his youth he had a leaning towards Communism. He even once waged war against the Department of Education.

This book serves also as a great source book on all Sarvodaya camp activities from the beginning to the present.

The author is a normal man. The moment he hears news of his daughter's birth he rushes to see her face. Since he was going around the country with a benevolent message at the time of her birth, he named his daughter Samya Charika.

In a context bristling with ethnic conflicts how Ariyaratne utilised the noble concept of human brotherhood is manifested in the camps conducted in Neerveli off Jaffna and in Kaithadi. Had he been able to continue with this programme it would have halted the current bloodshed. The fact that he was unable to is explained in this section.

We should read at leisure his account on "Path to Buddhist Revival." This outlines his strategy for establishing an institution devoid of party friction and party politics along with the structure of such an institution. The purity of this process is highlighted.

The focus on education and community development is also very clearly described. It was Dudley Senanayake who moaned,

"Regardless of Ari's advice I again got embroiled in politics." He listened to Ari's advice. Ari also listened to advice:

"We will both die one day of tummy upsets because we never take regular meals due to this 'nuisancical' politics. This practice is a deterrent to health. A person must have at least one meal at the regular time." Ariyaratne obeyed this advice of Mr. R.G. Senanayake. and always made it a point to have his lunch between 12.30 pm. and 1.30 pm.

Next the narrative goes on to deal with the commencement of Shanthi Sena, an integral facet of Sarvodaya, and then describes the Thiruketheeshwaram camp and the Hundred Villages Re-awakening scheme. Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, a great mentor of Indians, came to Sri Lanka at this time and a good account of him is also given in this book.

Ariyaratne was unexpectedly awarded the Ramon Magsaysay award, the Asian Peace Prize, at a relatively young age. All details of this too are given in the book. He speaks of the local reaction that transpired after his award in such incidents as that of a Customs Officer at the airport making an issue of whether Ariyaratne should pay duty on the gold medal and the cheque of \$10,000 that he received from the Magsaysay Foundation!

Ari had plenty of people who were envious of him as inevitably happens to good people who become active and are recognized for their actions. Many obstacles arose to challenge his work. Some people went so far as to say that the value of the Magsaysay award was diminished by conferring it on Ariyaratne. The money Ariyaratne received from the Magsaysay Award was donated to the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement.

Ihala Kuruketiyawe Veda Mahaththaya (a native physician of Ihala Kuruketiyawa) was another who helped Ariyaratne in formulating the Sarvodaya philosophy. What constitutes happy living? A beautiful environment. Clean water. Simple apparel to cover the body. Fuel. Education and spiritual development. These are the basics, this Veda Mahaththaya taught Ariyaratne.

Mr. Merryl Fernando gifted Meth Medura to Ariyaratne in 1971. At this time his father had passed away. That whole tragic episode is given in detail. The youth rebellion of 1971 too took

place at this time. Ari helped many of those connected to this insurgency. Many of his local critics forget these facts. Though Ariyaratne does not loom large before them, writings in other countries about him that appear in books and journals testify to people's high esteem of him.

The chapter on Dassenena Sampanno encapsulates the whole autobiography. The underlying philosophy of all of Ariyaratne's activities is presented here. This philosophy highlights the aim of life as follows: satiate man's hunger, make him economically strong and then implant the spiritual growth within him.

Sarvodaya never fled from contemporary social problems. It did not approximate to a mere social welfare scheme either. Issues confronting the society were all taken into account and solutions sought through activating people.

Sarvodaya has a political philosophy, too. Twelve features of this philosophy are given and a five-fold programme which constitutes its working structure are described. One who masters this philosophy well will be convinced that herein lies salvation for all beings.

This work of Ariyaratne is no mere autobiography. It is a great analysis of human life. The fashioning of the character of Ariyaratne reads like the unfolding of a novel. To one interested in the genesis and growth of the Sarvodaya Movement, the book reveals its socio-scientific foundations. To another searching for the elements of Sarvodaya philosophy, it reveals the fact that Sarvodaya is not a mere welfare movement but a very animated work programme and a People's Movement.

Reading this book we are infused with knowledge and wisdom. We walk along the path of experiences collected by the man Ariyaratne. That he is a very average man like any of us is clear from his autobiography. Yet what is it that distinguishes him from us? Maybe his indomitable courage that has him loom above us like a non-wavering Indra keela.

He is indeed a wonderful man. A rare man. A man outstandingly noble among the human multitude.

Prof. Nandasena Ratnapala



My grateful thanks to my dear sister
Ms. Jacalyn E.S. Bennet,
of West Newbury, U.S.A. who sponsored
this book and whose life is
dedicated to Dhamma and Peace

MY DEAREST ARI ★ FEB 6 2001

I'VE JUST RETURNED TO THE USA
TO FIND YOUR LETTER (EMAIL) THANK YOU
I AM SO HAPPY TO HEAR THAT YOU ARE
WRITING THIS WONDERFUL + IMPORTANT
CONTRIBUTION TO MANKIND. IF ONLY ALL
HUMANITY WOULD REMEMBER THAT WE ARE
HERE TO SERVE OTHERS. HOW VERY
BLESSED THE WORKS YOU HAVE DONE
FOR ALL, AND YOUR BOUNDLESS LOVE +
INSPIRATION! THANK GOD + THE UNIVERSE
FOR YOU ON THIS PLANET + MY SINCEREST
GRATITUDE TO KNOW YOU IN THIS LIFE ♡
IF I MAY I WOULD LIKE TO, IF AT ALL
POSSIBLE SPONSOR THIS BOOK. IT WOULD
BE A GREAT JOY TO MY HEART. ALL THE LOVE
OF MY HEART + CENTER OF MY SOUL TO YOU +
YOUR FAMILY ♡

PEACE ALWAYS,
JADYN ★

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1

In the Beginning ...



Photo 1. Roomassala mountain

Today my age is 44 years 4 months and 29 days. A long time has passed since I resolved to commit to writing the more significant events of my life. Every time the thought entered my mind to write I suppressed it for many reasons. Again, many factors motivated me to finally begin executing that resolution. I have no intention of analysing each of these factors or reasons in detail here.

Maybe the desire for “becoming” and for keeping alive one’s memory among the living when one has exited from life propelled me to write this autobiography. Thus, this book is called Bhava

Thanha, the desire for becoming - to be born again and again. I am not ashamed of this desire as I have not yet been able to conquer all my defilements ("klesa"). The reader may be able to glean something useful even in a writing launched with such a motive. Further the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement on which I have invested a major part of my mental, verbal and physical energies too may be able to benefit from this work .

Hence I have decided to limit my "scribe activities" only to facts that would be of some use to readers and to leave out facts that run counter to this objective. For it is I alone who has borne the repercussions of my errors. If any other person has suffered because of my errors, I am truly sorry but I cannot remember any instance where I have acted to deliberately hurt another. Perhaps such a thing may have happened in a circuitous sort of way, when the course of my helping one adversely affected the fortunes of another. I reiterate. There was no deliberate intention here.

Since the events related are those that have revolved around my life that I play the central role in this work is almost inevitable. Though I have exerted myself to record these events in a neutral spirit if somehow I have contrived to make me emerge as a hero out of it all it is also an inevitability arising out of my mundane nature.

This work, while more or less based on experiences that I had recorded and refer to, also presents my life story via memories of episodes triggered by those recorded events. I have tried to maintain a semblance of chronological order and present the work as a saga of events commencing from my birth and eventually leading to contemporary times in a sequential pattern.

Every character in this book is a true character. I will not indicate some of them by name since they do not see themselves as I see them. What is finally recorded in my autobiography is the perspective from which I see myself and the perspective from which I see others. What I perceive as real may not appear real to them. In the same way that personality is endemic to a particular person the way truth is perceived by that particular person is also endemic to him or her.

Time has become a commodity that is not my own. Never will I own it, even in the future. This phenomenon may go on until my death. Every moment of my adult life I have invested in Sarvodaya work. If I do find the time I may be able to meet some of the characters mentioned in my book, chat with them in a relaxed way if they are still living, compare my perceptions of them with their own and render a greater service to Truth. Human nature tends to erase from memory the unpleasant and retain only memories of the pleasant.

That the human is a traveller through Samsara (cycle of birth and death), and therefore seeking final liberation, may be the reason for the above tendency to retain the good. Even a bad human may try to project only the good in himself while suppressing the bad, for his final aim is to be good and this very striving makes one happy with himself.

Reformation even at a late stage – there is nothing wrong with that.

Despite all such drawbacks that would surface in my work, here I go.

Good News ... Venue, Vienna

It was last month, exactly on June 23rd 1976, that I left my motherland. I flew straight to Zurich. From there I proceeded by air to Vienna, capital of Austria where I stayed at the Hotel De France.

The ancient Palace of Avesberg was the venue of the International Voluntary Service Conference and through its exotic gardens I used to walk daily to the sessions. Three hundred representatives from 96 countries participated in this conference. I was one of the ten in the Executive Committee and a chief speaker as well. A lecture tracing the development of voluntary services in Sri Lanka was assigned to me. Without the aid of notes I delivered my speech, which just poured forth from the springs in the depths of my heart.

In this talk I gave a verbal demonstration to the audience on how the development of the national independence movement took place in our country, gestating and growing via the activities of entities and institutions such as the Sangha Samaja or Community of Buddhist Monks, the Buddhist Theosophical Movement, the Amadyapa Sangamaya or Temperance Movement, the Mahabodhi Society and YMBA (The Young Men's Buddhist Association). The ethics embedded in all these, I told them, went into the makings of the Sarvodaya Movement.

It was obvious to me that the talk energized the audience. More than one hundred people met me afterward and expressed their thanks, stating that the benefit of attending the Conference was already reaped by listening to me. But I had not told them anything extraordinary. What I said was that to prepare to build a new world society we must utilise our human hearts and minds and combine the material and spiritual resources we possess.

Diyath Samantha

A very significant event in my life took place while I was in Vienna. On July 1, 1976 I arrived in Avesberg Palace after lunch, wrapped in a thousand thoughts. On June 23rd I had left my country in a heavy frame of mind which was rare for me. I needed a release from an acute mental trauma I was being subjected to.

Yet I was carrying another heavy burden in my hand.

What caused the trauma ? There was an emerging feeling in me that an elder I had held in high esteem had begun to be envious of me. I had tried my utmost to rid myself of this feeling but the attempt was futile.

So I had decided to leave the country to forget all the unpleasantness engendered by this feeling.

But the time that I made this resolution was also a critical time for this husband and affectionate father attached to his family. My wife was expecting our fifth child.

I departed from them physically but not mentally on June 23 at 7.30 in the morning. I had left the country many times before, leaving Neetha, my wife, all alone but it was only that day I witnessed pearl like tear drops trickling down from her eyes. I pretended not to see them, hid my agony in the deep recesses of my mind and got into our vehicle. If I remember correctly, Jomis Aiya, Saliya and Vincent accompanied me to the airport.

The Swiss Air flight taking me to the conference took wing. But from that moment until I participated in the Avesberg Palace Conference after lunch on July 1, the figures of Neetha and the unborn infant within her haunted my mind.

For seven days after this I was bonded to them spiritually by meditation. This meditation comprised the Anaapana Saathi Bhavana (Mindfulness Meditation) that helps to bring into focus dissipated thoughts, and the Metta Bhavana that instills a global dimension to these thoughts. Through these two types of medita-



Photo 2. Diyath Samantha (at 3 months) smiling with father

tion, I conferred wishes for their welfare from thousands of miles away. On the night of June 30th, the strength I had cultivated left me and my mind became light. I could not sleep after that. I had hoped for a son and was hoping that Neetha and I would be blessed with a son. The hope churned within me again and again.

The next day a young woman on the verandah of the Conference Hall handed me a telegram. The good news I had hoped for appeared before me. My eldest daughter informed me



Photo 3. Diyath and Neetha

that a younger brother had been born and both mother and child were doing well. I felt like embracing the woman who had handed me the good news. A frenzied desire arose in me to fly back and hold my son in my arms. The news that I had become a father that day spread quickly among the participants. Congratulatory kisses were in plenty and my happy tears flowed fast but nothing could dispel the craving within me to see my son and feel the warmth of his tiny soft cheeks.

The father who had left the country to help the world to reconcile differences satisfied himself finally by sending a telegram suggesting the name Diyath Samantha (Diyath meaning “helping hand” and Samantha meaning “to close the gap between rich and poor”) for his newborn son and conferring the blessings of the Triple Gem on him and my dear wife, Neetha Dhammachari.

Running in the Wrong Direction

Recently there crept into my mind the memory of Jomis aiya who accompanied me to the airport when I was enroute to Vienna. He served in the Security Service of Meth Medura, the Sarvodaya headquarters at the time.

Jomis aiya hailed from Unawatuna, my own hamlet which can be described as a large village. His house was situated on the sea side of the Galle-Matara road while our house was located on the land side. The exact location of his house was about 100 yards from the sea on the same level as the beach. This place was known as Ja Koyuwa or Jaya Kotuwa. Our house stood on the slope of a hillock named Peellegoda. About 300 yards away from our house at the base of this hillock the ocean waves would lap at the coast providing us a very picturesque view.



Photo 4. The house I was born in – Pansala pahalagedera

Photo 5:
Our House



Overlooking our house was the Chaityalankara temple of Peellegoda that earned our home the name "Pansala Pahalagedera," meaning "the house below the temple." During our childhood the temple was the nucleus of all village activity. Jomis aiya was among the foremost devotees of this temple. Edmund aiya was another active devotee I remember. Older than

Jomis aiya, he is still among the living. I presume that my elder sister was older than Jomis aiya because he used to address her as Nonakka ("akka" being the term used for older sister). It was only in school that we addressed each other by name. The usual practice outside of school was to use familiar names. So while my eldest sister was called Nona my sister next to her was known as Baby while I myself was called Podi mahaththaya and my younger brother, baby mahaththaya. The tide of changing times perhaps accounts for the fact that the



Photo 6: Peellegoda Chaityalankaar Vihara

youngest girls in the family were known by their own names, Padma and Amara.

Our Loku Akka (Eldest Sister)

An early memory ensconced within me is hanging on to the hands of our loku akka (elder sister) and walking to the Unawatuna Buddhist mixed school. I was about 3 years old then. Since I was below the official age of school admission all that I did there was to languish on a back bench in my sister's class. My sister was in the SSC (senior school certificate) form then. Even at that young age I was simply fascinated by my akka's beautiful handwriting. The famous writer Edwin Ariyadasa and his sister Dayawathie akka were also students in this same class. My loku akka used to address Ariyadasa aiya as Hinni malli which meant "little brother!" Jomis aiya would have studied in a class below this form.



Photo 7: Entrance to Gananandarama Vihara



Photo 8:
Mr. Edwin Ariyadasa

One of the things I relished in my childhood was the sight of the processions that wended their way from the school to the temple on Poya or full-moon days. All participants would be clad in white and would carry a "watti" (basket) of flowers in their hands. These processions, starting from the school would proceed to two other temples as well as our own. One was Ganehena temple about a quarter mile from the school along the Matara road and the other was Galketiya temple about a mile

Photo 9:
Amarasuriya
Walawwa
sited in our
Village



along the Galle Road. Jomis aiya was one of those who organized the school procession to the three temples.

Running in the Wrong Direction

I remember an incident that occurred when returning from Galketiya Temple after having offered flowers to the Buddha. Loku akka descended the flight of steps of the temple, took hold of my hand and turned in the direction of Matara. Our house stood exactly one mile from this place along the Matara road. However, I announced that our house was in the direction of Galle and not in the direction we were going and began running towards Galle. My sister gave chase but I ran on and on with the help of my little feet. Jomis aiya joined in the chase and he finally managed to get hold of me. I rained blows on him with my hands and feet mustering all of the energy stored in my little body.

Photo 10:
The Indian
ocean - as
viewed from
our house



A Remarkable Man

Jomis aiya is indeed a remarkable man. He looks the same as he did when I was in the crawling stage of life. Forty years have lapsed since then but his appearance remains the same.

Characters like Jomis aiya from our villages just fade into oblivion. He belongs to that calibre of volunteer workers ready to offer their services at every public occasion in the village – be it a festival, a need of the temple, a thovil (healing ceremony), a wedding or a funeral. They are completely devoid of the habits of drinking, gambling and other vice and are disciplined by the traditional Sinhala culture alone. Jomis aiya, never having passed a public examination, finally became a mason. That he was not at all a wizard in this profession was revealed when my father entrusted to him the construction of a latrine. Even today that ill-constructed latrine with a very low seat is in disuse.

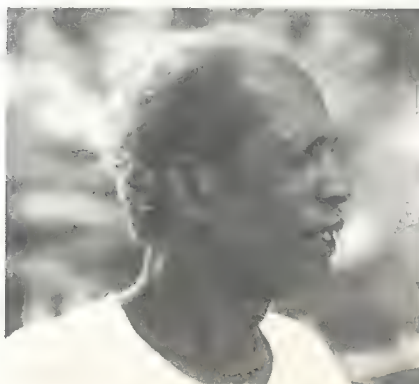


Photo 12: Jomis aiya



Photo 11: Galketiya Vihara

Later Jomis aiya plummeted into a jobless and quite impoverished state and when I met him almost by accident on one of my visits to the village he was really in the depths of despair. I brought him to Moratuwa and he finally ended up in the Security Service at Meth Medura.

In my childhood Jomis aiya had kept me from running

the wrong way and brought me back to the correct path despite the onslaught delivered on him with my wee hands and feet. Could I not reciprocate by showing Jomis aiya the correct path? This question arises in me every time I see him. In fact he has become symbolic of my endeavour to refocus society's wrong steps and take it along the correct path. The present society pursues riches, titles and fame. Cannot society ingrain within itself values such as sharing and co-operation? Why am I always concerned about reforming society so that it will allow itself to emulate such virtues?



Photo 13: Recalling old memories on the beach with Piyadasa aiya



Photo 14:
The lace cushion of Ahangama Yakkini was etched in my childhood memory

Our Temple

I mentioned earlier that our house stood below the Peellegoda temple. A fountain that gushed in this terrain in days gone by gave the village the name Peellegoda ("peelle" means stream). Now a huge tank for bathing and a small well for supplying drinking water have replaced the fountain. Both these – the tank and the well – belong to the temple. Below the tank flourished a grove of bamboo while in front of the temple a Sal tree spread out its rich canopy.



Photo 15: The two water tanks

From my crawling stage the temple was a familiar place to me. According to my parents it was Ven. Ahangama Sri Sumanajothi Nayaka Thero who not only named me but taught me my first letters beginning with "aa"(අ,ආ). Educated at Vidyodaya Pirivena in Maligakande off Colombo he won his Rajakeeya Panditha Degree (a degree given to learned Buddhist monks) there and went on to become the Anu Nayaka (deputy chief priest) of Mihiripanne Nikaya. He was an erudite scholar, an

eloquent exponent of the Dhamma and a prolific writer as well. Many elders of the village who remember him credit him with having been the catalyst for the intellectual awakening in our village.

This great prelate's figure is etched in my memory still. His room was in the huge hall situated in front of the Sal tree. At one time he was taking treatment for a foot injury from one Galagama Veda mahaththaya.

I used to learn my lessons from him then and he used to make me sit on the arms of the lounge chair as he tutored me.

After a successful session of instruction the prelate was in the habit of acknowledging my learning by the gift of succulent grapes. Once I had just been subject to this generous gift after which the Noble one got up from his seat and almost out of the blue I received a thunderous blow on my cheek. I looked up to see my father standing there like a tornado of fury.

It is forbidden to eat food belonging to the Sangha fraternity he shouted and was about to deliver another hard blow when the Great prelate began to lambaste him in turn. He informed him that the grapes were presented to him by Kirigoris Mudalali, that they were not formally committed to the use of the brotherhood of



Photo 16: Ven. Sri Sumanajothi
Maha Thero



Photo 17: The tomb of the Maha Thero

monks, and that it was not at all sinful to partake of them. This incident spawned a period of disenchantment with my father that was so intense that in anger I refused to eat anything he brought for me. I even went to the extreme of avoiding his company by disappearing into the temple when he came home, disappearing to the house when he visited the temple! And never again did I partake even of a kurumba fruit (young coconut) within the temple premises.

Venerable Ambagahawatte Jayatissa was the founder of Peellegoda Chaityalankara temple. It was to him that a two acre stretch of land necessary for the construction of this shrine had been gifted by several people including Gabo Singho, a devotee and also my father's grandfather. Together they had endeavoured to put up the image house, the *dagoba*, the *sanghavasa* or dwelling-house for monks and the *devale* or the house of gods. The small granite wall surrounding the land and the road to the temple were also fruits of their labour.

The venerable Ahangama Sumanatissa became the student of the prelate Jayatissa while the venerable Ahangama Sumanajothi was ordained next in succession. Returning to his village after having received his education at Vidyodaya Pirivena he was responsible for the religious and spiritual upliftment of this temple.



Photo 18: The image house and the chaitya

A certain upasaka (devotee) named Hendrick Dheerasekera of Habaraduwa, inspired by the sermons of the Chief abbot (Nahimi), now became a mentor of a great religious movement in the area. A massive Vihara complex began to be constructed replete with *dhamma sala* (preaching halls), *dana sala* (refectories), *sanghavaśa* (dormitories for monks) chapter houses, bathing houses and toilets. Talk about any lapses in constructing these buildings was conveyed to the upasaka in his dreams. His prowess

in astrology naturally endowed him with the ability to choose auspicious times. He also trained many novitiates for the monkhood but only a few were fortunate to finally receive ordination.



Photo 19: The Gantara Pillar



Photo 20:
The Seema Ge
and Devale

To this group who did ordain belong the venerables Ahangama Vanaratana, Ahangama Pagnananda, Polhene Seelananda, Ahangama Vijayavamsa, Unawatune Chandananda, Naradde Vedananda, Devundara Upasena, and Polhene Aggarama.



Photo 21 : The Hallowed Bodhi

In 1928 my father, with the financial aid of Siyaneris mudalali ("mudalali" means shop owner), repaired the dagoba of this temple and installed its pinnacle. Also, one hundred and seventy relics of Arahats received from a devout Brahmin from South India were deposited in the recesses of the dagoba. Many people are of the belief that the gods have a soft spot for this particular sacred site. This "soft spot" is what we Sinhalese literarily call the "Deva balma" a word that defies translation.

What Ananda Thera was to the Buddha, the monk Ahangama Vanarathana was to the Chief Incumbent of our temple tending to his every need. In 1990, on March 17th at about 7.00 pm. Ven. Ahangama Vanarathana passed away. On April 29, in 1937 the Nayaka Thero (Chief monk) passed away. Many



Photo 22: Dharma saala (preaching hall)

elderly prelates, celebrities, well-known people such as Henry Amarasuriya, Thomas Amarasuriya, A. D. Jayasundera, G. T. Panditha Gunewardena, D. D. Jayawardena, Notary Public, native physicians A. Jayatileka, Yatalawatte Wijesinghe and

Vaidyasekera, also known as Veda Ralahamy, Dr. Seneviratne, engineer Tatie Amarasuriya, Baas H. Arnolis, Siyaneris mudalali, P. Pungadeera. M. K. Desayas de Silva, A. Abeyratne Ralahamy, T. Samel Silva Ralahamy, K.D. Jayasena plus countless village folk wept that day. I too mourned deeply along with the sobbing group. That funeral scene is etched in my memory. By the great ocean, in the coconut grove had been built an enormous structure for the cremation. The Venerable's cortege was placed in

a magnificent *Ransivi Ge* (decorated vehicle used to carry remains of the prelates and VIPs) carried in a procession around the village and then consumed in flames. The funeral oration was delivered by Ven. Narada Thero, head of Vajirarama today.



24: Ven. Narada Vedananda Thera and I



Photo 23: Ven. Ahangama Vanarathana Maha Thero

It was customary to construct a *thorana* (pandal or decorated arch) at the entrance to the path leading to the temple. It was also the custom to display a poetic verse on the thorana and on the *mandapa* (small hall) built for the display of the relics of the deceased. Even today I remember the verse that was displayed. The poet was the Nayaka Thero (Chief monk).

"The Great One fortified with the power of Paramee
(Perfections)
Was born-on Vesak Full Moon day
So come hither and feast your eye on the relics
Of that Great One who showed you the way to Nibbana"

Our Grandmother

Our father's mother was the chief devotee of our temple. I still remember how she looked. Very advanced in years, she was the only one who approached the Chief monk without hesitation. She treated the Chief Incumbent and the lesser monks as her own children. Once when she walked into the temple she was witness to a strange sight. Some monks were washing rice, some were scraping coconut and some Samaneras were making fires to cook. My



Photo 25: Ven. Unawatune Chandananda Thero,
Ven. Polhene Seelananda Thero and I
(in 1943 at 12 years)

aththa (grandmother) set to work. She walked around the village and assigned the provision of morning and afternoon meals for the monks to different families. This was the birth of the Salaka Dana system in the village. Even today the Salaka dana of our house is supplied to the temple every eleventh day of the month and on the Sinhala New Year day.

The University in our Village

The Chief monk in our temple, now deceased, created our university in the village. Who were the students of this university? Elders like my aththa, educators such as the headmaster in our school and state officers like our village headman. The discipline

that was instilled in them by this universality is not to be found among people in today's society. One has only to observe people like G.K.D. Jayasena, the Vice Head Master and note their way of talking and the way of dressing to understand the depth of life that was part of their experience. It also makes us aware of the vacuum left by the loss of beacons of learning such as the Chief monk.



Photo 26:
Mr. G.K.D. Jayasena

Amara Nangi

The last moments of my aththa's life are a good example of the strength of personality which that generation exhibited. She was past 80 years when she died. She sent for the Chief monk and had the Satipattana Sutta recited. Then she folded her hands and made obeisance to him, sought permission (to depart), collected her grandchildren about her and wished them all adieu. Then she requested her children to gather around her, embraced my father, her eldest son and declared that she had no unfulfilled desires for any of us and wished for the Satipattana Sutta to be again recited. We commenced reciting it and she listened smiling. As she was breathing her last, my father became childish enough to cry out, "Amme, be born again as a daughter of mine!" It was his intense devotion to her that propelled this cry. That was the first death I witnessed in my family.

When Amara, my youngest sister was born my father was of the belief that she was aththa reborn and he held this belief till his death. He declared even a few days before his death that he loved Amara more than all of us and was very sad that Amara was childless after years of marriage. Our family ties, in life and even after life were very strong.

Our Village Folk

On August 5, 1976 at midnight I flew to the island of Caribbean Puerto Rico, for another Conference. The leisure time I had yesterday I used to commit to writing my story for about 3 hours. Since only a discussion took place in the afternoon for about two hours I continued writing in the afternoon. My breakfast consisted of a glass of milk I had ordered up to my room. For lunch I partook of some rice and soya gravy brought from the canteen since all the other food was non-vegetarian. I wondered whether the Puerto Ricans ever eat any tasty food. My penchant for tastily prepared food I inherited from punchi nanda (my younger aunt), the expert in food and nutrition in our family circle.

My Father's Family

According to data given to me by my loku akka regarding our family history, our story goes as follows:

The first family story recorded was a tragedy. It surrounded the collapse of a hill on which a house where Ahangamage or Thommahewage Gabo Singho and Beregewattege Savumyahamy lived with nine children. Except for two of the offspring, Bastian and Sabanhamy, who had been sleeping under a table, all the others succumbed to the catastrophe. Mr. Bastian later married one Nonnohamy of Matara and became the father of four. When Mr. Bastian's wife died, Subanahamy became the foster mother to her brother's children and remained unmarried. Mr. Bastian later re-married, this time to Weraduwege Ensinahamy of Habaraduwa. Her family was a prestigious family in that village. After the col-

lapse of the earlier ancestral house, our present house called Pansala Pahalagedera was built around 1855. The entry of Ensinahamy into this abode signalled the commencement of a lucky phase for this family. She became a loving mother to her step children Saradias, Karlinahamy, Thomas and Haramanis. They were three sons and a daughter. Ensima's own children with her husband were named Hendrick (my father) Sopinona, Cornelis, Nonahamy and Laisinahamy. She brought up all nine children very lovingly. The eldest son, Saradias, was ordained as a monk under the name of Unawatune Jinaratana. He became a resident of Gananandaramaya in Ganahena and began a practice of coming home to receive his alms everyday. On these visits he became sensitized to the trouble and toil his foster mother underwent to bring up the children. The unwashed apparel of his sister too made him sad. Finally he decided to give up robes and help in the economic upliftment of the family. His temple education made it easy for him to procure a job as a clerk in a trading establishment in Badulla. Years later he began a business of his own and made his brother Thomas the co-partner. He achieved a lot later, including the building of a tiled house and getting his sister married to Nikulus Raigamkorale, a landed proprietor of Goiyapana. My grandmother used to recount to us with relish that the wedding entourage made their way in five horse drawn carriages.

This couple had five offspring who were named Emelihamy, Agohamy, Sisilihamy, Babynona and Siripala. They led respectable lives. Siripala emigrated to Malaysia where he married and passed away without coming back. Saradias married Weraduwege Disanahamy of Habaraduwa, who died during the birth of her second son, Wimalasena. The first son was named Sirisena. Goiyapana nanda (an aunt) cared for the motherless children but Wimalasena passed away at the age of 3 years.

Saradias Jinadasa died around 1925 and his son Sirisena was then brought up by his grandmother. After leaving Dharmadutha College of Badulla, Sirisena became a clerk at Sravasthi Watte of Anuradhapura, a company belonging to Mr W.A. De Silva. In 1935 he became a clerk in K.M.S. Company

of Opanayake and was later in charge of the petrol shed of Danny aiya at Veyangoda. He became asthmatic later.

My father, Ahangamahewage or Thomahewage Hendrick Jinadasa, was the eldest son of my grandmother. The sister next to him, our loku nanda (elder aunt) married Dinoris Wickremetunga a trader of Pelena off Weligama and settled there.

Her name was Sopinona Jinadasa. Next came Budu nanda (my sacred aunt) whose name was Nona Hamy Jinadasa. Between them was a younger brother named A.T.C. Jinadasa, who later blossomed into a famous novelist. The youngest in father's family was Laisina Jinadasa, our Punchi nanda (youngest aunt).

For some reason or other the name Jinadasa has been omitted in my birth certificate, but my *malli* (younger brother) Weeraman Jinadasa has retained it. His sons, Deepal and Sahan, also carry the name Jinadasa. In our family, only my father and loku nanda got married. Budu nanda, bappochchi and punchi nanda remained single. This accounts for the paucity of our relatives on the paternal side. I never met my paternal grandfather. By the time I was born he was already dead. We did not have many blood relations. Yet transcending all caste and creed distinctions, we were accustomed to the practice of addressing all those in the village by terms reserved for relatives.

My Mother's Family

Almost to balance the shortage of relatives on my father's side we had many relatives on my mother's side. My maternal grandfather was Hettiarachchige Carolis Silva. My maternal grandmother was Madduma Hewage Sangohamy of Bambaranda. Both of them I knew in my childhood but their faces remain indistinct in my memory. I well remember my mother's elder brother,



Photo 27: My father, Ahangama or Thommahewage Hendrick Jinadasa

Gajadeera Ara-
chchige Baby
Silva, who work-
ed as a driver in
the country's first
Hire Transport
company and
later as the officer
in charge of traf-
fic in the same
company. My
mother's other



Photo 28: Father before
Gordon Gardens in Fort



Photo 29: Father, "bappochi" and my aunts

siblings were Karlaine Liyanarachchi, Leelawathie De Silva, Magilin Wickremesinghe and William Silva who worked in the artillery regiment of the Second World War. He was a fine musician and singer, and after the war, he visited us often in our Maradana house and entertained us with his talents. He even made cassettes of some of his songs and at my sister Lalana's wedding, gifting a cassette of his songs to the bride.

None of these relatives roam the earth today. Their offspring go on but with sadness I note that my involvement with my Sarvodaya Movement has unfortunately prevented me from close association with them. I meet only them at family gatherings.

Photo 30:
My mother and her
three sisters on
Padmini nangi's
wedding day
(from l to r)



Photo 31:
My father (l) and
father of Sirimana
aiya (r) before 'loku
mama's car

Photo 32:
My mother and "bamma"
at Dias Place in Colombo



My loku mama (elder uncle) had five sons named Louis Danasena, Bandusena, Karunasena, Chandana and Ananda. My Madduma nanda (the aunt next to my uncle) had seven children named Sirimanne, Dayaseeli, Chularatne, Dhammatissa, Kalyanaratne, Jayaratne and Padmini. Padmini works today full time in our Legal Services Movement. My balamma (youngest aunt) had three sons and one daughter, Wimalaratne, Siriwardena, Mahinda and Rane. Wimalaratne captained the cricket team at Nalanda while Siriwardena was a Navy officer. Only Mahinda lives today. My punchi amma (younger aunt) had four children named Thilak, Indrani, Anoma and Mahinda.



Photo 33:
W. Wimalaratne De Silva "mali"
who captained the Nalanda cricket
team



Photo 34:
Samel aiya, elder brother of
Rosi akka

In my mind lurks a plan to invite all these of the younger generation to my house and introduce them to each other.

In our childhood three other families lived on our land. Their houses were made of mud. In the first house lived Rosi akka and her parents Kurunayakage Ayonis (whom we called appochchi) and Matarage Podihami (whom we called Kudamma), her younger brothers William Appu and Samel and her uncle Lewishamy mama. Apochchi used to climb coconut trees the whole day, pluck the nuts and, as his fare, bring home a coconut from each tree, carrying them strung around his neck. He would come home inebriated with toddy to ward off fatigue. Even we small kids knew that. Lewishamy mama's profes-

sion was chanting mantram with blessed oil. Whenever we fell ill before any other treatment, we used to get this blessed oil anointed on our heads. If that did not help, he worked his mantrams and charms on a mango twig with which he patted our heads. If that did not help either, he tied a charmed yellow thread on us. If this too had no result he got others to enact a *thovil* ceremony. Very often these rituals of Lewishamy had good results and many children were cured.

The other house on our land was that of Koggala nanda or Karalinchi Hamy. Her husband was Matarage Mathessamy. He had a cart and a bull. Their children went by the names of Jasalin, Somalin, Somadasa. Nandadasa, Thimona, Samson, Alice nona and Somawathie.

The house at the rear was the abode of Asilin akka's family. Her husband was Karolis aiya. They had three sons named Piyasiri, Dharmasiri and Wijesiri.

I always attended the funerals of these families. Their youth worked with me. Some I helped to build houses. Though immersed in poverty, these three families lived respectably.

Sadina the Grandmother

It was Sadina aththa who had attended my mother at my birth. Known also as Sadina upasakamma, Sadina the devotee, she looms in my mind as the epitome of Sinhala Buddhist culture. I developed a great love and devotion to her further due to the fact that my mother had informed me that it was into her hands I had been delivered when I entered the world.

Walking about 100 yards to the east of our house, you come to the steps leading up to the compound in which the sanghavasa (dormitories of the monks) stood. After 40 steps there stands the Devale or the House of Gods. Yet further up is the Dhamma sala (hall where the doctrine is preached). Above all of this is the temple complex and, looming above it all is the pristine white great dagoba which, along with the canopies of coconut trees, is visible from the ocean. About 100 yards beyond the wall surrounding the temple was Sadina aththa's house.

Kande Arnolis baasunnahe (“baasunnahe” is a term of respect) was Sadina aththa’s son. We used to call him Arnolis baas uncle. My father and he were bosom pals. Whenever he visited us during the New Year or on any other occasion it was his habit to bring a lot of presents including fruits such as grapes and apples. In his coat pockets silver coins jingled and we would vie with one another to get him to give them to us to fill ourselves with tidbits such as gram.

Baasunnahe was the richest man on our hillock then. He had built a massive house on the opposite slope of this hillock, which, however, was never completed. His excessive generosity and extravagance were responsible for that state of affairs. His wife, Ratnapura nanda, was a beautiful plump lady. Their son, Sirisena aiya, was the first Communist I ever met. He taught me Communism verbally and via his books.

Sadina aththa lived more than 90 years. I attended her funeral, worshipped her cortege on my knees and even made a funeral oration. According to her last wish, some sacred relics she had protected and esteemed over the years in her abode were carried over to the temple on my head after her death and deposited there. Today these relics have found pride of place among the sacred relics of the temple.

The bond between our two families finally encompassed the whole village in my orbit of love. Late in life, Baasunnahe mama sank to a bankrupt state. I attended his funeral. I never got news of Ratnapura nanda’s death.

All Are Relatives

My amma (mother) was known by everybody as Kolomba lamaya, Kolomba akka, Kolomba nanda, Kolomba kudamma and by other terms preceded by Kolomba or



Photo 35: The day my parents got married

Colombo as was the custom of the times. But my mother was not from Colombo. She was from Pelena off Weligama, but since her father worked in Colombo this appellation stayed with her.

My father had met her in amma's Kolomba gedera or Colombo house. After their wedding, he had come to the village one day when the temple had been illuminated lavishly for some ceremony. Amma had mistaken it to be some felicitation ceremony for the new couple, a delusion that father had encouraged in a frivolous mood. Why the villagers continue to address her as the Colombo child I got to know only later.

The women folk in the houses around were known by appellations as Koggala nanda (aunt), Habaraduwa nanda, Katukurunde nanda, Weligama nanda, irrespective of any class or creed difference. Everybody in the village addressed each other as aiya (brother), akka (elder sister), nangi (younger sister), nanda (aunt), mama (uncle) and malli (younger brother). This form of intimate address clearly endeared everyone to each other and this fact impressed me so much even in my childhood that it motivated me to introduce this practice much later into Sarvodaya.



Photo 36: Lionel Amarawickrama aiya (l-standing) and Siriman aiya (r) with a friend



Photo 37: Loku akka (my eldest sister), malli (younger brother) and me before the vihara

My Birth and Injury to the Ego

I had been born on November 5, in the year 1931. The respective dates of birth of my eldest sister Aslin Sumithra, the sister next to her, Lalana Chulalatha, my younger brother Weeraman, my younger sister, Madura Padmawathie and my youngest sister Amara Kulawathie are April 16, 1921, January 2, 1928, March 11, 1934, December 25, 1935 and September 16, 1941.

The gaps between these dates say something: my parents had planned their family at an optimum level. They had never attended family planning lectures, known about or seen the gadgets used for birth control. Until now I too have never seen them nor wish to see them.



Photo 38:
Aslin Sumitra (loku akka)



Photo 39:
Lalana Chulalatha (baby akka)

All six of us were born in our ancestral house. I remember the day Padma was born. William aiya who lived in the house above



Photo 40:
Myself



Photo 41:
Weera Jinadasa (malli)



Photo 42: Madura Pathmawathie
(loku nangi or younger sister)



Photo 43:
Amara Kulawathie (youngest sister)

ours was seated on the verandah and inquired whether the new born was a sarong or a kambaya. The answer came from the mid-wife busy in the room, "kambaya". It was that day I learnt that the genders were distinguished by names aligned to the apparel they wore, the sarong by the male and the kambaya by the female.

As a delivery approached it was the custom of the monks in the temple to chant the *Angulimala piritha* (Angulimala a terrible criminal who was converted by the Buddha and became a great saint. He became a man of great compassion so this is a blessing of great compassion for the mother and baby). This was chanted in the morning and in the evening sessions. During the delivery too this

pirith was chanted by a layman. That day William aiya recited it. Not only did he wear white but he was very fair-skinned and good looking except for a rather deformed nose. Later I noticed that his toes and fingers were missing. He also constantly visited a hospital in Hendala.

It was much later that I learned that William aiya was a victim of leprosy. He was very clever in the mystic and occult arts that made many fearful of him. Once when he had no place to live my father gave him a piece of land in a far corner of the family cemetery. I concurred with this decision.

He was married to a young woman named Josinahamy akka, whom many considered to be the most beautiful woman in the village. I respected her. Dressed always in a white jacket and chintz cloth, she earned my respect because of the way she took care of her husband. She supported her husband by splitting stones or by knitting fibre into coir, both of these hard work that caloused her hands. She was really an embodiment of fidelity.

William aiya was a son by the first marriage of Piyum mama of Ihala gedera. Piyum mama's second wife was Matara nanda. Lanu Hewage Edmund aiya was a son by this marriage. He had two sisters whom we addressed as Dayawathie akka and Agnes akka. All of them played a prominent part in any activity in our house.

I have a hazy memory of Piyum mama. He had a majestic bearing. His apparel consisted of a fully buttoned up white coat and white tweed pants. He had worked under Depita fiscal Edirisinghe of Galle. Depita fiscal was actually a corruption of Deputy Fiscal. It was his duty to escort prisoners from the Courts to the prison house.

The longest distance I used to walk when at home was to Ihala Gedera. It stood on another hillock at the rear of ours. A veralu tree stood on this hillock. One day while climbing this tree to pluck

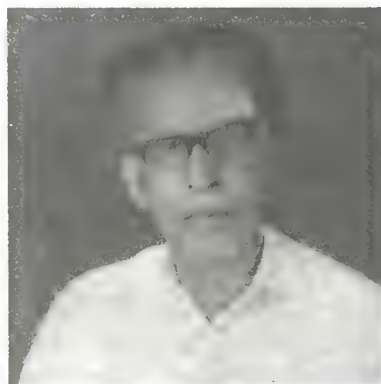


Photo 44: Edmund aiya

its fruits, I toppled down and screamed. Soon I lost consciousness. Edmond aiya came running and carried me to Godewatte physician's house where they tended to me and after rubbing and plastering my hands with the necessary medicines and ointments, took me home. I was about 7 years old then.



Photo 45: Nandalal, son of Edmund aiya, sister and other family members

About two years later, Edmund aiya took me to sleep in his house. Piyum mama used to take some liquor in the evening. Then he would turn rather boisterous. From my childhood memory of this, I dislike immensely those who take liquor. Why I went to that house to sleep that night was because everybody in my house had gone to Somawathie akka's funeral. When Piyun mama saw me, I heard him making the following remark, in his inebriated mood:

"Just give that fellow some rice and coconut sambol and roll out a mat for him under the bed".

My ego was injured a lot by this remark and I just dashed out of the house to run down the road to my own house. I got Rosi akka, my neighbour, to cook rice and prepare a coconut sambol for me. Edwin aiya came and exerted much effort to take me back but failed.



Photo 46: Rosi akka

"Don't be afraid, malli. You can sleep here" said Rosi akka taking me in to her home. Until I fell asleep he went on knitting coir on the verandah of her house. Never did I approach the area where Piyun mama lived after that. Rosi akka, whose real name is K.N. Rosinahamy, even now has a hearty laugh over this incident.

The First School, Temple and Social-Environment

I have already mentioned that I held on to my eldest sister's hands and trekked to Unawatuna Buddhist Mixed School from the age of 3 years. There I studied up to the 3rd standard, a period about which I do not have much recollection. Even today if I trample something with my big toe in the left foot I get a pain, a result of a cut with a piece of a bottle at that time, an incident I remember.

Other than this incident I remember these people of by-gone times. One



Photo 47. Ven. Paudit
Denipitiya Chandrajothi Thero



Photo 48: School teacher
Mrs. Sandaseeli

is Ralahamy Iskola mahaththaya, the school master, who always dressed in a white coat and cloth and brandished a cane in his hands. He was tall, trim and moustached. I also remember Mrs. Sandaseeli, my school teacher who taught me in the 3rd standard. The famous psychiatrist, Dr. D. V. J. Harischandra is her son. Another I remember was Jayasena, the school master who taught my sister's class. Other than these, I remember the Vice Principal L.H. Jayasena, a regular visitor to our

house, Mr. Jinadasa, short but adept in volley-ball, and the head-master Mr. Karunaratne.

The village and the temple taught me much more than the school. The Ven. Panditha Denipitiye Chandrajothi Thero was at this time the incumbent monk in our temple. We called this erudite and great monk Valleshota Hamuduruwo. His way of pronouncing words and the style of speaking were very melodious to the ear and I loved learning from him. I learned the *Buddha Gajjaya*, the *Vyasakaraya* and the *Prathya Shatakaya* from him, books I had to commit to memory. Sprawled out on the rocks behind the temple along with the young monks, I learned by parrotting the Sanskrit slokas in these works.

It was with people like Jomis aiya, Davith Singho aiya and Edmond aiya that I walked from door to door collecting funds for the temple ceremonies. Because of this, there was not a single house I had not visited by the age of 9 years in the area of Unawatuna hillock or the hamlets Jakotuwa, Godella, Ganehena, Maharamba, Yaddhimulla and Peellegoda.

Almost every day there was something going on in the temple - a sermon or a festivity. On Poya (full moon) day there were more special programmes and on major Poya days such as Vesak and Poson, the programmes dragged on for weeks. Much of the time, my mother, aunts and sisters were devoted to these. Never would I forget how on Vesak Poya day the Loku Hamuduruwo would begin the ceremony of displaying the Sacred Relics. He would carry out the relic casket amid the sound of conches and drums and the fervent cries of "Saadhu...Saadhu...Saadhu" emanating from the devotees.

As the casket of Relics was taken out of the temple a beautiful drizzle we call a Mal vessa (flower rain) started that made me just overflow with devotion to the Buddha - "Buddhalamban preetiya" is the local term for this kind of pious and joyous feeling.

To the South East of our house rose another hillock on which was a cluster of houses. On a plateau beyond yet another cluster of houses sat. Such habitats were known by various names, including as Godella, Rendegedera. My sister used to go to learn

the art of knitting (Rende) to the house of Charlinahamy (called as Chaari) nanda. Each house was assigned a role in the development of the village economy and for community education.

Ganehena temple was situated to the East of this junction. One could reach Ganehena temple by traversing the temple hillock above our house and coming to the main road along a foot path.



Photo 49:
P. M. Hemasiri Malli

The Advent of the Sinhala New Year in the Village

Weligama Kudamma's house was situated about 100 yards in front of our house on the side of the road opposite the temple. Her husband was William Samarawickrema Mudalali, a trader who did business at Deraniyagala. During the Sinhalese New Year all those who worked outside the village returned. Into this category fell William Singho baappa, Hendrick baapppa, husband of Chaari nanda, Georgie baappa (George Mahabodhi doctor) and my own father. They then exchanged New Year gifts. Babunappu baappa used to dress up like a brahmin and dressed his son in the garb of a disciple and go around the village garlanding his neck with a Nava guna vela (rosary).

What did youngsters like us do at this time? We played Vala kadju, after having collected enough kadju nuts (cashews) for this game. In our play group belonged the younger monks, lads such as Lionel, son of Weligama kudamma, Hemasiri, son of Podinona Kudamma, Bandusena and Ariyadasa sons of Katukurunde nanda.

There were other games we played. Turning stones into balls we played vala bola, kalli and thaachchi and other games along with rotating the bambara (spin) and the wheel. Catching salt and catching the fire known as *lunu alleema* and *gini alleema* were yet other sports we fancied, but we also just enjoyed playing hide and seek and going up in the air on swings.

Who is There in the Room ?

One day we – Aggarama podi monk, Upasena podi monk and I – hid in a large closet in the temple. Suddenly, the Chief monk entered the room. We signalled to each other to be completely silent.

The Chief monk went on crying, "Who is in the room?" several times so that finally Aggarama podi monk blurted out "Api" (we).

Who is api ?"

"Api"

"Who the devil is Api ?" roared the head monk.

"Mama" (I) answered the Aggarama podi monk this time.

"Who is mama?" asked the Loku Hamuduruwo (Chief monk).



Photo 50: A meeting with Ven. Polhene Aggarama Thero (at 78 years)

"Aggarama hamuduruwo"

Thus answering, the little monk got out while we just sat there frozen with fear. Then we saw the Loku Hamuduruwo having caught the spirit of the prank, laughing and walking away.

After playing the fool the whole day I went home in the evening ready to get a thrashing from a bundle of *ekels* (dried veins of coconut leaves) from my mother. She was away, and so Budu nanda or Punchi nanda washed me and fed me. Then I went to bed early. If amma (mother) was there that I would have gotten the ekel thrashing for dirtying my shirt or some such behavioural flaw. This was inevitable, after which I was fed and put to bed early:

My Budu Nanda

Venerable Ginthota Poojya Panditha Pragnaloka Thero, who visited our temple regularly, was a fluent exponent of the Dhamma. One day I was standing by the road with my little brother when the Venerable was enroute to the temple. He asked me for my little brother.

I got so enraged at the request that I cried out, "Nanda, this son of a bitch is asking for malli".

The venerable was so shocked at this outburst that he just held his robe, covered his face with the *watapatha* (fan) and hastened down the road with not a glance back. My aunt came running and dragged me home. Then she tied my hands on to the *alavangu* (crowbar) used for husking coconut and went on hitting me with a bundle of ekels crying out, "Will you ever again use bad words with a monk?"

"Please stop, budu nanda, I will never again use bad words," I pleaded and promised. Punchi nanda, the most tolerant of our household finally came to my rescue and took me under her wing. That was the last instance in my life that I used bad words.

My tutor in the use of bad words was Lionel, son of Weligama kudamma. He was the thug in our clan and if anybody wished to injure any of us, Lionel was duly provoked.

One day we were walking along a jungle road when we saw an elderly person walking along the main road about hundred yards behind us.



Photo 51: Ven.Pundit Ginthota
Pragnaloka Thero

"You brag about your ability to aim. What about the bald head of that person?" We provoked him. Soon the old man was feeling his bald head on which a mango seed landed by surprise. This presented a pathetic spectacle.

Lionel became so incorrigible that finally his father took him upcountry, which infected me too with a desire to go upcountry. I expressed my desire to my father who shared my habit of making hasty decisions.

He said, "Tomorrow morning when I am going, join me."

That was the first quarter of 1940 if my memory is right.

Struggle for Equal Opportunities

Chapters three to nine in this autobiography I wrote between June 23rd and July 1st of the year 1976. These following chapters I wrote on the island of Puerto Rico, situated 12,000 miles away from my motherland. It was at midnight on July 5th of the year 1976 that I came to Puerto Rico from Vienna.

That night I stayed in a hotel at Sanwan Airport. The next morning I hired a taxi and went to Sagrado Corazon University College.

It was on the invitation of Madam Kate Katesky, a lady who I revere, that I came here. She is the General Secretary of the International Social Welfare Federation Council. The 17th Session of this organization in which I participated was held in Nairobi in 1974. The 18th Session to be held in July 1976 was being hosted in this city with the participation of about 2000 delegates. To me and eight others who had arrived before fell the assignment to formulate the main essay of the conference entitled "The Struggle for Equal Opportunities".

It was a sort of a pre-conference committee to which professors from Australia, Canada, Ghana, Zambia, America, Costa Rica, Mexico, Austria and Italy were invited. I acknowledged their integrity and intellectual prowess that superseded mine. But none of them had the background of Buddhist philosophy. That made them regard the issues to be addressed very superficially and I felt sympathetic towards them on this matter. As regards other extraneous matters, they knew much more than I.

Puerto Rico

About 300,000 people lived on this island. The language was Spanish. It was a territory belonging to USA and hence most of its resources are owned by Americans. About 100,000 Puerto Ricans had gone to the mainland in search of jobs. In return about the same number of Americans were working as entrepreneurs here. Puerto Rico was, and still is a classic example of the economic preponderance of America.

It does not take long to perceive the artificial veneer that shrouds the Puerto Rican life style. The ordinary motor car has given way to a very luxurious car that is almost the size of a half lorry. The university students seemed very interested in pursuing their studies. But one wondered whether it was a real education they received or a mere training as one took into account their modes of dress, their extremely sensual behaviour, their open display of eroticism and their sexy dances and gyrations. Yet this island had been blessed by the bounty of nature. Wherever you turned your eyes, the emerald green of the foliage glistened. This natural vegetation of mango, domba, tamarind and coconut was certainly reminiscent of the beauty of my own country.

I went for dinner to the canteen with Professor Johnson, the head of the Social Science Faculty of the University of Ghana. But as the menu was a repetition of the lunch we walked to the town as the huge sleek cars of the students drove past us.

Lack of Jobs a Blessing

We inquired from some English speaking persons whether those who received an education here were assured of a job at the end. The answer was that unemployment was rampant in Puerto Rico but that many did not exert any effort to find a job. The explanation for this state of affairs was that the state paid an allowance to the jobless that was tantamount to the income of job earners. During their student period, the youth were paid 200 dollars a month for education and 200 dollars for food. Later if they had a potentiality of earning about 800 dollars a month from a job they were entitled to a relief payment of about 600 dollars a month.

The outcome of this system was a proliferation of young people who did no work but spent a dissipated life at state expense.

We walked along the pavement away from the campus. On the way we met three drunk males with girls dressed in tight body-exposing outfits. They were all creating a merry din. We crept into a Chinese restaurant and had our fill of a soup dish and plate of rice embellished with vegetables.

Our residential rooms were on the second floor of the dormitory which had to be approached by an electric lift. At the counter of this lift stood a pleasant woman somewhere around the age of my mother. She was dressed in a long frock of pastel colours. Bespectacled, well-built and tall, she was always smiling. She talked to us in Spanish which we did not understand. I thought of Budu nanda back home and regret my lack of knowledge of Spanish to be able to talk to her.

That night we continued our discussions till nine. We had to complete the last section of the essay assigned to us. The sun continues to shed its light until about 8 in the night in Puerto Rico while began its business by about 5 in the early morning hours.

Looking After Elders

I stated in the discussion that it was the duty of children to look after their parents and elders without sending them to homes for the aged. It was a tradition of high cultural value, I reiterated. But no one else in the group was for its inclusion in our presentation. But due to my interest they compromised and agreed to include a section on "respecting the elders."

Maternal Status

Similar opposition was displayed in the inclusion of the status of mothers in the section on women's welfare. When I went on to focus attention on the vital role a mother plays in transmitting spiritual and cultural mores to her children and emphasized that for the continuation of the world, the self-respect of womanhood had to be honoured, middle aged Ana Maria of Italy disagreed. She declared that she was completely averse to inclusion of the word "mother" in this section. However I pointed out that

in our society "mother" is held in equal esteem with the Buddha, and that we do not envision the duplication of the phenomenon of broken families, characteristic of developed countries, in our part of the world. I raised my rather sotto voice when expressing these ideas and that made them give in.

Beauty Contest

I survived on milk coffee the next morning. For lunch I went with the rest of the group to St Anne's hotel and ate rice with some unpalatable curries. For dinner I had a quart of milk. While the others proceeded to the city for dinner I stayed back in the rooms with Professor Carlos. He told me that the 1976 Miss Universe contest was scheduled to be shown on TV that night and took me to his room.

The beauty contest was held in Hong Kong. About 72 representatives from different countries were participating in this burlesque show. The judges comprised businessmen, film producers, actors and actresses. The announcer at the outset declared that the contestants would first introduce themselves in their own language and then in English.

I waited impatiently for the contestant from Sri Lanka. I visualized her walking gracefully onto the stage in a Kandyan saree and greeting the audience with folded hands and an Ayubowan. Then a few words of Sinhala and then a few words in English. But the world collapsed at my feet at the actual sight.

A woman carrying an English name and dressed in a funny alien costume came on and hollered, "Hello, Ladies and Gentlemen" and vanished. I got enraged with anger.

I told Professor Carlos that she was definitely a foreigner alien to our culture and that the true native women of Sinhala and Tamil races would never take part in these burlesque shows.

The beauties later preened and pirouetted in bathing costumes and evening gowns. An Israeli came first, a Venezuelan second. If ever Sri Lankan women take part in such contests, I feel that it should be guaranteed that they convey the authentic Sri Lankan culture. The government should take measures to enact due regulations to ensure such authenticity.

After the TV show I went up the lift and had a glass of milk and an orange for dinner. The time was about 12.00 midnight. The next morning we had to proceed to Conrado Beach Hotel where the main conference was to be held. I decided to wash my soiled clothes. Professor Salvador from Mexico helped me insert ten cents into the slot and the machine started going. In twenty minutes the clothes were washed and dried. I ironed my clothes using an electric iron and went to bed at about 2 a.m. I woke at 5.30 am, had a hot water bath, drank the rest of the milk, ate the last orange and dressed to go out.

I had to pay 75 American dollars for the five nights spent here. Then I hired a vehicle and went onto the Conrad Beach Hotel. Room no. 849 on the 8th floor had been reserved for me. I left my bag inside and went out to have a view of the surroundings.

I also posted a picture postcard to Bandula malli to be handed to the Family Gathering of Meth Medura. I scribbled the following verses on it in Sinhala.

(Translation)

In an island in the Atlantic,
I am immersed in a dialogue
But it is the music and melody
Of Meth Medura that plays in my ears

Most of the day I spend in solitude
I eat only one meal for two days
I sleep on the eighth floor
Everywhere I look emptiness reigns
Let self-ego be dispelled
May you strive for the public good!
May the pots and pans (of Meth Medura) be filled!
May the Sarvodaya family prosper!

The Mind Relaxes

From my Journal:

I have been in this hotel for 12 days. Many here are acquainted with me now. In many instances I have had to show them where the island of Sri Lanka is located on the world map. Last night, a group of us including Professor Simon Bergman of Israel, Professor Lawris of the US, two Mexican young women and I were rounded up and taken to the television station by Ms. Felisidas R. Catella, the executive secretary of the conference. We participated in a programme entitled 'Encounter.' The medium was Spanish. I spoke in Sinhala and English and what I said in English was translated into Spanish. They told me that it was the first time that a Sri Lankan had spoken in Sinhala over their station. I also showed them the location of my island.

Strength of the People

On the 18th the conference was declared open by the Governor. About 2000 representatives were present. Professor Grant Johnson of Ghana read out the summary of our presentation first. There was a main assembly daily, after which we broke into discussion groups. The only lecture that really impressed me was the one delivered by a young professor from Jamaica. His name was Rex Kettleford.

He waxed eloquently on how the imbalance created by colonialism was perpetuated by Christian missionaries and had spread worldwide. Both the capitalist philosophy of Adam Smith as well as the Socialist philosophy preached by Karl Marx having been spawned on European soil were White philosophies, he argued, and can never act as saviours for today's impoverished countries filled with rich pasts.

The only path, he said, was to organize ourselves at a grass-roots level based on the structure of our own cultures so that power will rest with the ordinary people. His speech ended amidst cheering from the audience that lasted about ten minutes.

I delivered my lecture last evening. My topic was "Education as a Means to Achieve Equal Opportunities." My co-speaker was a woman named Patma Mahamood, from Sudan. My lecture was relevant to the topic while hers was on an economic connection that had no relevance to the topic. This denied me the opportunity of answering the only query put to me other than to give a brief account of the Sarvodaya movement. Before any other question was asked from me, she declared the session closed. The actions of this foolish woman wasted a precious 45 minutes.

The night before last we were invited for dinner at the house of one Mr. Pat Rice. He gave to me a frog made of ceramic while I gave him a replica of our lion flag.

My life here has become very mechanical. I get up at about 6.00 am have a bath and then proceed to the restaurant close by have my breakfast. Then I attend the conference and have my lunch at a Chinese hotel. Again I get back to the Conference Hall, then I have dinner and go to sleep. Sometimes I sleep without having my dinner.

Last Sunday a new friend visited me. He is Mr. Dudley Dissanayake, acting head of the School of Social Work back home. I knew him from childhood. He had come here to attend a seminar connected to Social Service. I got 200 dollars for him and after that he was with me. Then I was no longer lonely.

It was a great pleasure to meet Robert Burgess of the American Quaker organization. I had made friends with him at the Nairobi Conference. He had with him a photograph taken with me there. There as well as here he took great pains to stop my smoking habit.

Now I feel more relaxed. The several letters I got from home, the telephone calls I received from brother Warnasena Rasaputram, my acclimatization to this place, Dudley's company and the release of my lecture I surmise are responsible for this relaxed mind.

I stopped my writing temporarily and went to post a letter. I met several on the way who recognized me as they had seen me on TV the previous day. They were full of praise for my lecture.

In the evening I attended a reception organized by the Australian Committee led by David Scott and attended a dinner held by the Hong Kong committee at a Chinese restaurant called Gold Coin. This committee seemed to have hired the whole place for the dinner and had plenty of liquor gushing forth. Everyone filled themselves with food. I also followed them, avoiding the meat dishes. This was the only meal I had for the whole day. But a question begins to rise within me. When millions all over the world are starving is it all right for social service delegates who assemble like this for world forums to hold gala food fantasies like this?

In the afternoon, having bid adieu to Puerto Rico, I flew to Washington. Just for sleeping in a hotel in Puerto Rico, I paid 415 dollars and 45 cents. I would have spent nearly 750 dollars collectively for the food and for correspondence including telephone calls during the three weeks I stayed here. But since I was a guest of the International Social Welfare organization they had to foot the bill. It had to be paid in dollars which, if converted to our rupees, had to be multiplied by 13. That would give one an idea of the cost of living here.

I have no time to think and reflect about this conference. But I made many friends here, acquainted many with my Sarvodaya concept and, cultivated an awareness of the ICSW organization. The myriad ways in which social service is meted out in different countries of the world became ingrained in me.

Other than a minor stomach upset yesterday, I am in good health. Dudley has put an end to my loneliness. But today he will be going home via New York and London. I have to plan the rest of my trip after going to Washington.

While here a hypothesis I always believed in transformed itself into reality. That is that to a man who chooses as his life's vocation the welfare of the common good and the purity of one's own soul leisure is a forgotten commodity. If leisure means just being lazy while appeasing the senses of hunger and other such

cravings, that leisure is just valueless. It only becomes a torment.

Most of the time I spent here was spent uselessly. I had no responsibility, being only a spectator of what others do. Hence I had no special interest in anyone or anything. Always my mind was riveted on the Sarvodaya Family gathering, on Neetha and the children and others back home. It is not out of an exaggerated sense of self that I state that attending conferences like this is a time waster, and that the greatest service of our organization can be rendered only by assemblies where I am involuntarily acting as the star. We have enough resources to act on our own.

One good thing resulted from this trip the waning of the mental anguish that was in me when I left the country. This shows the sagaciousness of viewing issues from afar. It is better to avoid talking of issues and much better to invest your time in doing something constructive. Though the position I hold and its attached responsibilities cannot allow me to be mute I must consider some other behaviours in the future.

On the one hand I have been a resident here. My mundane nature instills sorrow in me that I have to leave this place and proceed to a new place. On the other hand, this is not my land of birth. I must get back to my culture, to my own people, to my own country where I was born, where I live and where I will die one day. That is my venue of salvation. That is my paradise.

At the airport I remembered Mr. and Mrs. Weera Siriwardena of Meddekande who were responsible for my true education and posted a card to them penning the following verses:

Along the path the Buddha preached
Sarvodaya philosophy follows
Hoping to permeate all five lands with it
And I see you with my mind's eye

The Puerto Rico island
lies lonely in the ocean of Atlantic
Remembering the learning you imparted to me
in the gorgeous mountains I write this to you

May your wisdom and wealth and health not diminish !
May you be consoled wherever you go !
May the Triple Gem bless you !
May the Viru Siru family prosper forth !

Now I am seated in the plane scheduled to fly to Washington. This plane that belongs to American Airlines Company will be enroute to that city in a few moments. This is a jet plane of the Boeing 707 category. This is indeed a most troublesome airport. According to the regulations of the Agriculture Department of America, first we have to open our bags for examining whether we are taking any plants out of the country. About 100 struggle simultaneously for the display of their bags. Now we have to get the okay label pasted and hand over the bags with that label pasted. The seat numbers are given in another place. Then the hand bags are examined for about one hour for weapons. I had only a milk coffee yesterday due to the tummy upset and I became nearly lifeless due to all this pressure. Dudley managed to fly away to New York one hour before me.

In the parlour as I waited for the plane I got into conversation with some social service workers from Japan. One of them I knew earlier at the conference. He explained to the others about my movement in the Japanese language. A Japanese gentleman asked me whether we import our food needs and I answered that half of these requirements we import. He said that the first step in a country's progress is self-sufficiency in food. Soon we got the signal to board.

Our plane stayed on the tarmac for about 15 minutes. During this time 6 other planes landed and 4 departed. We took to the air at 4.45. Now we are flying at 20,000 feet over Puerto Rico which becomes visible only through the clouds. Soon only the vision of the clouds and the blue sea are left for the eyes to feast on.

The Splendour of the Mid-Mountainous Terrain

It was only a short time after I arrived in Meddekande that my teacher, Mr. S.A. De Alwis Wijesiriwardena read my horoscope and ascribed the following qualities to me. I had the lucky predicament of getting friendly with anybody who came my way, that I got impressed very soon by others but was prone to break newly established friendships suddenly.

My journey to Meddekande via Ratnapura and Balangoda seems almost a dream. At dawn we took a bus from Unawatuna to Panadura in which I fell asleep in my father's lap. I awoke only at Panadura from where we took a bus belonging to Panadura



Photo 52: Dethanagala mountain as seen from Rassagala highway

Motor Transport company and then reached Ratnapura. We had lunch in a hotel on the banks of Kalu ganga and again took a bus to Balangoda from where we proceeded by bus to Meddekande. Meddekande by sunset! That was how and when I saw this resplendent terrain first.

A person who was very happy about my arrival here was a young man named David, a salesman in our shop at Meddekande. A very intimate subordinate of my father, Rengasamy, became my guardian. He worked in the tea estate. The cook there, Reuben, hailed from our village. In the shop a bespectacled Samarajeeva, who was from Ahangama, worked as a clerk. I cannot remember the names of the other workers.



Photo 53: Shopping complex at Meddekande (today)

The first morning I spent at Meddekande is carved deep in my memory. My father's stores were known as "The Saappu kade", the shopping stores. This one was located in a Thun Manhandiya, a junction where three roads meet. The fore road led to the village of Meddekande. The road to the right led to Rassagala and the road to the left to Balangoda.

In front of the shop was a large flower garden, more than two acres in area, personally designed by my father. A bo-tree planted by my father, took his major attention. This bo-tree became the haunt of a snake who I saw frequently there. The bungalow of the chief clerk of Meddekande estate was situated at the southern end of the flower garden. He was a Tamil gentleman.

Photo 54:
The water cascading down in the village waterfall



The road to Rassagala curves its way past this bungalow as it runs to Rassagala. A view in the southern direction throws into focus a deep precipice and beautiful sierras. Terraces of tea spread across the mountains. To the left of the shop another hill is visible, also covered with tea cultivation. Between the mountain ranges cascades a beautiful waterfall.

Father's vegetable garden was at the rear of the shop. Other than banana, upcountry vegetables such as rabu (radish), carrot, cabbage and leaks were grown. It was the first time I saw the cultivation of these vegetables. However, the huge *jamanaran* (mandarin) tree behind the bakery was what most fascinated me and later much of the time I used to roost in this tree.



Photo 55: The Bo sapling planted by father (today)

It has always been my custom to wake up early in the morning. In the early hours the air that pervades this area is fragrant with the coolness of a mild breeze. I took much delight in walking everyday from the shop about 100 yards towards Rassagala and feasting my eyes on the sierra of mountains including the Sri Pada mount that loomed in the distant horizon. Dethanagala hill (Mount of the two breasts) that captivates everybody who

visits Balangoda was another natural entity that enthralled me. The sunshine that gradually fell on the central mass-tiff of hills signaled the lifting of the gossamer veil of mist that had lain over the landscape.

This gorgeous natural fantasia became the subject of beautiful poetry by A.T.C. Jinadasa:

What is this veil on the mount?
It is a fine gossamer veil thrown
on the (duo of) mountains
By the goddesses to cover
These raised breasts of the woman Lanka



Photo 56: The road leading to Meddekande

Five hundred years ago the monk-poet Sri Rahula paid this panegyric to this landscape propelled by religious piety as well as adulation of nature's magnificence:

Friend, yonder can be viewed the Sri Pada mount
On which is etched the lotus foot of the Buddha
Worshipped by gods and their goddesses
With madara and parasathu flowers



Photo 57: Tea pluckers on Meddekande tea estate

As I used to gaze at this mountaneous chain from the valley of Meddekanda I was in the habit of reciting these verses and just letting myself be filled with peace.

A long time later when I was blacklisted by the State I indulged in a Sama Sakman Bhavana (peace walk meditation session) in this area with thousands of my well-wishers. Our walk begun in Maha Nuwara (city of Kandy) had as its destination, the Sri Pada Peak. Here is a poem composed by me on this walk to invoke the blessings of god Saman:

The very wind that blows here is fragrant
With the scented whiff of Sil
The peak of Siripa carries the holy majesty
Of the Sacred Feet
We invoke your help, god Saman
You who always followed the holy path of the Buddha.

Into the Hands of the Headmaster

While I lapsed into a mesmerized state created by the beauty all about me, father exerted himself to introduce me into a new world. First the workers in the shop – about 15 to 20 – were introduced. Father's store complex comprised a bakery, a shop, a tea kiosk, a grocery, a tailoring section and even a games table. Villagers as well as the workers in the estate became our customers. Father could read, write and converse in Tamil. Soon I too began speaking in Tamil.

Father took me to the tailor and ordered two shirts and two shorts to be made for me. I will never forget those two dark shaded shorts and the two red striped shirts. Those were the apparel I treasure in my memory most fondly.

It was at Meddekande that I met the person who was to have the biggest influence on my life. He was short, stout, very strong, and golden coloured. His eyes were small and when he smiled the rims of the eyes wrinkled. He talked with his mouth drawn to one side. His uniform was the standard dress of the day – a cloth of Fuji silk and the national banian. The buttons on the banian sleeves and the banian were of golden sheen. I have never seen any other person other than my father sitting on par with him or talking face to face with him.

Everybody addressed him as Loku mahaththaya (head master). He earned this title since he was the head master of Meddekande Buddhist Mixed school.

Loku Mahaththaya's actual name was S.A. De Alwis Weerasiriwardena. He hailed from the area of Hanwella and had got married a few days before I went to Meddekande. His bride was D.C.K. Samaraweera from Hidellana off Ratnapura. Earlier a Christian, she had become a Buddhist subsequent to her marriage. Eventually these two almost became like my parents.

I met Loku Mahaththaya first in the shop. That morning as the headmaster entered the shop father told him, "mahaththaya, I have brought you a golaya (student). Take him over."

"Very good. Is this your son?"

"Yes, the eldest. He wished to come up country."

"His name?"

"Tudor Ariyaratne."

"What class?"

"Third standard, going on to fourth."

"Good. Let Tudor attend school from tomorrow."

"He not bring the school leaving certificate."

"That can wait."

So next day along with father and Rengasamy I walked to my new school. Everything was novel to me, even the road before the shop. The tea bushes luxuriating on the slopes below and the distant fountain flowing down like the white sheened locks of a Greek woman all presented a flavour of something strange and fresh. On the left side of the road was a ridge of white thirivana (quartz) stones which again had this novel feeling. The boys attending school



Photo 58:
S.A.D. Alwis Weerasiriwardena
(the Headmaster)



Photo 59:
Mrs. Weerasiriwardena
(Mrs. D.C.K. Samaraweera),
almost a second mother to me

with their hair tied into a knot and the tea pluckers known locally as *thangachchis*, (sisters) laden with tea baskets on their backs and walking all over the roads as they headed toward the estates again instilled this inexplicable sense of novelty within me. And so refreshingly novel were the *kanganis* (supervisors) dressed in white vettis and black coats, their heads turbaned and in their hands, coffee knives. Even the language they spoke instilled a wonder in me. The strap shoes I wore and my very apparel, so novel, carried within them this feeling of wonder.

I had entered a totally new world.

Laying the Foundation for a True Education

Past a row of boutiques one came upon a flight of about hundred steps hewn of granite that lead to a summit of a hill. Rattaranhamy aiya's boutique stood to the left of the base of this flight of steps while on the right were two other boutique rooms connected to each other. I did not know at the time that for four years to come this complex of the three boutiques was to be our habitat.

The steps led to Meddekande temple. My new school was a hall of 20 by 40 feet that stood in the temple compound. Just below on either side of the steps stood the headmaster's quarters and the assistant master's quarters. The assistant master at this time

according to my memory was M.D. Perera. The staff comprised the headmaster and Mr. and Mrs. Perera.



Photo 60:
Flight of steps leading to our temple

Photo 61:
The Dhamma
saala once used
as the school



The school hall was actually the Dhamma sala (preaching hall) of the temple. Other than this, the buildings on the premises were a Sanghavasa (dormitory of the monks), an image house and a water tank. Later a Bodhi sapling was also planted.

Father took me to the Loku Mahaththaya to whom I paid obeisance with a sheaf of betel and tobacco and a tin of biscuits. Rengasamy squatted on the steps.

"Mahaththaya, I wrote to my eldest-daughter to get the school leaving certificate and send it over," said my father.

"All that is fine" replied the headmaster. "When it comes just send it through the son. Let him go back home with Rengasamy."

"You come back with Rengasamy."

Father patted me on the head and took the umbrella to depart. I watched him until he descended the steps. The view of his head at the rear of which his hair was tied like veralu fruit disappeared finally. A desolate air hung about me. I suddenly remembered father, mother, aunts, and my siblings and my eyes filled with tears. Into my memory swam the monks of my village temple, the sea and the white coast fringing it. I became overcome with an urge to run to the village I was born and bred in.

"Come here, Tudor," broke in the headmaster's voice. I walked to his table in a bit of fear. A blue velvet cloth covered his table. A list of books written in beautiful handwriting (the master's

writing) was on it. I remember the following books mentioned in the list – *Subhashithaya*, *Lokopakaraya*, *Ummaga Jathaka* and *New Method Reader*.

"Father can buy these books for you from Balangoda or Ratnapura. I will be admitting Tudor to the fourth standard but as there are no students in the 4th standard of this year Tudor will have to study with the children of the 5th standard. There is no 6th standard either this year. So many classes will have to be taken jointly. Do not hesitate to come and ask me anything you do not understand"

I assented.

I went to class and sat in the front row. Only two other students were dressed in shorts and shirt. All others wore sarong and *banian* (vest) or *jangi* (short trouser). There were many features that distinguished me from the rest. I was the only lowlander in the class. I was the son of the manager of the Shopping Stores Complex, a prominent character in this outlying society. Only I wore shoes and I had Rengasamy to hold an umbrella above me as I walked. All these lent an air of distinction to me. However by the end of the day many children had become friendly with me.



Photo 62:

Seated with 73 year old Mr. Wijesena in the classroom where we studied in our childhood

Education Through Life

So I started my schooling at Meddekande. The education I received there was not subject centred but was centred around the student. How did that happen? Because there were no separate teachers for the different classes and the different subjects. Further, children of different age groups worked together on common assignments.

A good part of my time was devoted to extra, curricular activities such as drumming, *lee keli* (a dance with sticks) *pantheru* (a kind of musical instrument played by the dancers) and upcountry dancing. The foremost teacher in these was the headmaster. An incredibly active person, he led all these activities like a child, dressed in a short sleeved vest and bifurcated sarong.

The teacher-student relationship was not limited to the classroom, books or formal occasions. It surfaced mostly during the extra curricular activities. The volley-ball ground, the venues of dancing and singing, the long walks covering about 15 miles across the terrain of Rassagala, Balangoda and Opanayake, the cultivation of the vegetable plots and *chenas* (a small area cleared by the villagers by cutting and burning the bush for cultivation), the construction of a kitchenette for the head master's house, the digging of wells – in and during all these places and activities the teacher-pupil relationship blossomed and grew.

A major part of my school life I spent in the head master's house. When he was away at night it was I who kept vigil at home with his wife whom I eventually began to call mother.

Because the school was situated in the Dhamma Sala, the link between the temple and school was very close. The monks in

the temple were Sumanatissa Thero, the chief incumbent, Meddekande Vajirapala Thero, the deputy monk and Sugathathis Thero, the Podi Hamuduruwo (junior monk).

Since I was used to associating with the monks in the village temple from my toddler stage, the affinity that I developed with the monks in Meddekande temple was almost natural. The connection between the Loku Hamuduruwo (chief incumbent) and me was an economical one. I was the courier who got his tea that had been sent to the stores measured. Receiving the due payment I handed it back to the robed one who took over the notes and gave me the coins. Later this chief incumbent disrobed and became a layman.

With Ven. Vajirapala Thero I had a teacher-student relationship. Proficient in English, he helped me with my "New Method Reader." He taught me the difference between good and bad. On long trips on foot he related to me lovely stories. I developed a love suffused with respect for this venerable man. Later, he became head of a temple around Pinnawela and I met him accidentally about 20 years later. He was a great son of the Buddha.

A Tendency Towards Poetry

With Sugathathis Thero I had a friendly relationship. This monk had an aesthetic bent. His handwriting was beautiful and he was equally adept in composing and reciting poetry. The poems written by Colombo poets during the war I had access to via Sugathathis monk. He studied in the same classes that we studied. We had formed a sort of poetry appreciation circle whose members, included Guneris, Charlis, Punchi Peiris, Kirthi, Sumana and others. Once in a literary society meeting that I presided, this monk introduced me by the following couplet.

"Very eloquent with a scissor sharp mouth.
He speaks the truth, this President of ours."

Once we put out a magazine called "Suvandha" (fragrance). It was edited by Sugathathis Thero. My name was there as President of the Sahitya Society. Though a major part of this magazine was penned by the editor there were some contributions by us too. It was I who was picked to present the magazine to the head master, which I did bursting with pride.

"H'm...Suvanda! "The headmaster roared as he went through it with a face turned red, himself a volcano of anger.

"There is no Suvanda (fragrance) in this. This is foul smelling dirt. Who wrote all this filth? Surely it was Sugathathis. Do you understand these verses?"

I just froze there with fear and the headmaster began to sense my innocence in the venture.

He read out a line from the poem entitled "To the aiya who joined the war."

"Suvadal palaya giya basayaka ellee" (The Suvadal plant hung on to a bus and disappeared)

"Who is this Suvadal? She is the one in the Handiye Gèdera (The house at the junction). The youngest daughter of Sammy aiya."

He read another line.

"Sudu mamage hene pansal watte kone." (In Sudu uncle's chena - an area cleared by the villagers by cutting and burning the bush for shift cultivation - at the corner of the temple land)."

"Do you know who he refers to as Sudu mama? To me. It is our house that is at the corner of the temple land. The chena referred to is my wife. He has queried whether this chena has borne fruit. What he is asking is whether no children have been born to my wife."

In this way as the headmaster went on analysing the whole book of poetry, I realized what had really happened. Sugathathis Thero had disappeared from the scene by now. I asked pardon from my master.

The next morning a ten line poem written in beautiful handwriting appeared on the blackboard as we entered the class. The first ten letters of the ten lines when put together read 'Ma Sugathathis giya' (I, Sugathathis have gone away - මැ සුගතනිසී ගියා).

The monk had begged pardon from the teacher via this poem. Never did I see this monk again. Thirty years later, a person I met in Balangoda town introduced himself as Mr. B.S. Hemachandra. Earlier he said he had been in robes under the name Ma Sugathathis Thero.

Influenced by this monk, I took to composing poetry myself, poetry that I cannot remember now. Once the Chief Incumbent of Peellegoda temple showed me a set of verses I had sent him. Two verses out of these that reflect the thoughts of a ten year boy are given below:

With tears I ask you, Thero,
Have you finished the temple construction work
That you indulged in so earnestly
Please reply this, but secretively (to father)

With tears pouring down
I think of all the monks there
Seelananda Upasen Aggarama
But consolation refuses to come to me

I am of the belief that a good practical basis was instilled in me by the education I received at Meddekande. It was that education that induced me to read literary works as Selalihini, Gira and Thisara Sandesha Kavyas as well as literary works of Kuasada Kava, Guttilaya, Dahamsonda Kava, Pujavaliya, Saddhamma-ratnavaliya, Buth Sarana, Kavya Sekharaya and Lokopakaraya. I am also convinced that it was this background that fashioned my ethics, mores and even my service pattern. If one does not know one's own culture he or she ends up an alien in his or her own country.

Father Launches into Litigation

The premises and buildings of the Shopping Complex were owned by a famous businessman in the area named K.M. Siyaneris Mudalali who had his head office at Opanaike. I think that my father owned only the goods sold there.

At that time a European named Diac worked as superintendent of Meddekande estate. Father's close friendship with him accounts for his having allotted a large plot to father for the flower garden. It was maintained so well that it had become famous and attracted not only Europeans but the offsprings of the Ratwatte family at Balangoda too. Sirimavo Ratwatte was one of the children who came there and he always remembered her with fondness and respect.

There was a *Naga* (large snake) in this garden whose haunt was the Bo tree (sacred tree) that father had planted there. Father was very fond of this Naga and it was with profound sorrow that father informed us later that after we left Meddekande this Naga had passed away to the other world.

One night after father had left for his village, Siyaneris Mudalali entered the shop unexpectedly. It was about 8.00 pm. Two police officers and a few other strange men accompanied him. Mudalali (merchant) asked all of them to stay in the shop and ordered all others to go to Balangoda. David stayed with me. He took me along with my books to the house of the chief clerk where we slept. That day I lost possession of my two shorts and two red shirts.

When father arrived at the shop in the night he became alerted to the dastardly act of the Mudalali. First having consoled me,

he went straight to Balangoda police which was headed then by one Inspector Eliathamby. It was revealed that Mudalali had coerced two constables on duty to come with him and terrified those in the shop with a show of power. Father had, at this time bought some machines and iron that were the debris left by a fire which had consumed a factory at Welekumbura Watte and had stored them around the shop. The mudalali's greed for these had provoked him to act in the way he had.

Father filed action against the Mudalali and the news of the case spread like wild fire. Through the intervention of friends of both parties and the endeavouring of Mr. R.L. Perera, father's lawyer, the case was closed with father getting damage claims close to Rs. 100,000/-.

Better to Beg than Exploit the Poor

In the meantime father rented out two houses close to Meddekande school. The war spread fast and this made father entice more and more people in the village to come to Meddekande. Father's main store was at Maddekande Kittan Ge and another house rented out served as a subsidiary store. That was how father began his wholesale business. By supplying the needs of outlying estates, his business was once more stabilised.

When Loku akka came from our village she had passed her Senior School Certificate Examination. Baby akka, whose name was Lalana, entered the Junior form. Though I was in the 7th standard I learned with the 8th standard children. This created competition between Baby akka and me. As the exam drew nigh I used to pretend to sleep but got up later and indulged in studies for hours. At noon I loitered and played about with other lads.

I passed the exam that selected those eligible to sit for the Junior School Certificate Examination. So I could sit the Government exam which I passed. But akka failed it. An application was forwarded to scrutinize her answer scripts, after which she was declared as a successful candidate resolving a critical situation at home. Malli and Pathma nangi studied in lower classes. Amara Nangi was still father's pet and was affectionately called by him "Sunduwa."

Once a Mudalali from Balangoda visited father. I cannot remember whether he was a Muslim or Tamil. When father visited our stores with him he took me, too. I remember father getting me to count the sacks of sugar, flour, green gram, gram, sugar, dhal, *kollu* (*dolichos biflorus*) and other items. Mudalali had come

to buy all that at twice their price. Government price control was about to be initiated and that transaction would have earned father several lakhs of rupees.

Having closed the door of Kittange I saw father staring at the mountains yonder and musing. In the background the Mudalali was going on chattering in both Sinhala and Tamil to entice father into the deal. Finally father spoke his thoughts.

"No. Mudalali. Thanks. In fact as I came here my mind was made up. I brought my son for him to know that his father is not one who accumulates wealth at the expense of the helpless. So this transaction is closed."

The Mudalali replied, "Liyana mahaththaya (clerk) is a peculiar one. I will take leave."

After coming home, father spoke at length on leading a just life.



Photo 63:
Sir Francis Molamure

The next day, having made a list of all the food items in his possession, father went with me to meet the Government Agent who was also then the Assistant Food Commissioner.

"Sir," he addressed the Government Agent, "Keep this list with you and when the price control begins you can take over these and give me my due cash."

The Government Agent was surprised by father's words. The news reached even Sir Francis Molamure who, if I remember correctly, was yet to become the Speaker of the State Council. He was a friend of my father and whenever he came to our house, he used to lift me up. That day when he came after receiving the news, he lifted me so high that my head knocked on the threshold of the door.

First he was critical of what father did but went on to praise him later. Then he offered him government contracts in the areas as Godakawela and Embilipitiya. This was the springboard for father's later activities as a government contractor.

First Election Experience

One of the strongest memories of my life at Maddekande is that of the first election I witnessed there. The election was fought for a seat in the State Council. The contestants were Sir Francis Molamure and Mr. Barnes Ratwatte, whose respective colours were green and yellow. Father worked for the former and Loku mahaththaya for the latter. The supporters of the two, dressed in green or yellow, carried out a vigorous election campaign.

It was at Balangoda I attended an election meeting held by Sir Molamure and listened to the first political speech ever heard in my life. The speaker was Mr. Wijayananda Dahanayake, whose speech many of us could say by heart for days after. The core of the speech was that Mr. Ratwatte was a reluctant contestant for this election who was only induced by his son-in-law, Mr. Bandaranaike, to run. Developing the theme in a very jocular vein, he compared Mr. Ratwatte to a horse and Mr. Bandaranaike to a jockey. At one stage of his long speech, a loud protest erupted in the audience to which the speaker retaliated by saying that Galle Kollo, the lads of Galle, never came to receive blows but were capable of doling out blows and if anybody touched him, the Ratwatte Walawwa (mansion) would end up tileless. That caused immense titillation among the youngsters there like me, transforming the election campaign into a thrilling and enjoyable experience.

Sir Molamure, in the end, earned a spectacular victory.

It was at Meddekande that I was audience to my first motion picture. I remember watching two Tamil films in a tent at Balangoda after having walked on foot from Meddekande. One was a silent film. A humorous character in the film, one S.S. Koko, is etched in my memory. The other film was "Vana Mohini" revolving around the heroic exploits of Vana Mohini with wild animals.

Siri Aiya

My eldest sister got married when we were at Meddekande. Siri aiya acted as the Kapuwa (match maker).

His full name was Sirisena Jinadasa, and was the son of a first cousin of my father. My paternal grandfather, in his first marriage, begot two sons, one of whom was Siridias Jinadasa, the father of Siri Aiya. The other who we called Loku Appachchi, was also known as Chandra Soap Mudalali.



Photo 64:
Mr. Siri Jinadasa

Siri aiya was a regular visitor at Meddekande. Since he was orphaned in his childhood and so my parents adopted him like a son. However, not having their attention at an early age, he never obtained a higher education. But the years as a student in Dharmadutha Vidyalaya of Badulla and at Buona Vista College in Galle, made him proficient in both English and Sinhala, and his knowledge in these subjects even surpassed the knowledge of most graduates.

A born poet, he worked first as a clerk in the Sravasthi Estate of the great patriot W.A. De Silva and later in the K.M. Siyaneris and Co. at Opanaika.

It was Siri aiya, who under the pseudonym "Deva Nagara" was behind that popular controversy, "Are women kind?" It was conducted in verse. He was a very humorous writer and the ideas

presented in this controversy titillated all readers.

One was "If women are kind, why do not they develop hair on their bosom?"

When we were at Meddekande, Siri aiya worked at Cyrus Stores in Veyangoda and later at the Palace Hotel in Nittambuwa that belonged to Danny aiya. At an election rally for Mr. Bandaranaike, he presented a *Prasashthi* (poem of praise), a few lines of which I still remember.



Photo 65: Siri aiya (l),
Danny aiya (proprietor of the Palace Hotel)
(middle) and Mudalali L.A. Perera

Thalaguli Jinadasa Mudalali

Siri aiya was a bosom friend of Warakapola Jinadasa Mudalali who became famous as Thalaguli Mudalali. Once Siri aiya composed a set of verses praising a delicacy known as Thalaguli:

Dear, it is all your fault
That the kids are suffering from worms
Just because there are sweetmeats at home
One should not just dole them away

A food may be good for the phlegm
But not good for gastric troubles
How do I seek a food that is
Good for all three elements ?

Dear, here I do not hesitate
A food that you
Will crave again and again
Full of taste and of quality
Is Jinadasa's thalaguli

On my way to Kandy I never forget to meet Warakapola Jinadasa Thalaguli Mudalali. Since he is a veritable national institution and was the pioneer of a flourishing local production I will mention a few verses written about him.

A mouth adorned with a majestic moustache
Fearless minus crooked ways
He is as loving to me as a sprig of flowers
There is no wrong in laying a few facts about him bare

Clever and cute as a warrior
Childish like an infant and so humble
Yet in the bosom reigns the heart of a lion
We entrust the Sinhala race and the country to men of
your ilk

That one need not wean away
An enterprise from others
You demonstrated to the Sinhala race
But yet pride eluded you
Yet you are a pride to our race



Local businessmen like K.G. Jinadasa Mudalali, devout, generous, dedicated to the Dhamma, are fast disappearing from the productive world of Lanka due to phenomena like globalisation.

Photo 66:
Mudalali K.G. Jinadasa
(Thalaguli Mudalali)

The First Wedding I Witnessed

One day Siri aiya arrived at our home with a youthful trader from Kalawana. Though we were kids we soon realized that this was a potential brother-in-law. His name was Weraduwaage Gunadasa and my mother fawned over him, treating him royally.

This provoked father to recite a traditional verse on son-in-laws which when translated reads thus:

When the son-in-law all amateur comes home
Even flowers are offered to him along with the daughter
But as he becomes stale
To the mother-in-law he is one plummeted to a dog

Mother reacted with some choice words of her own to this affront and disappeared into the kitchen. We were highly entertained by this scene.

Meanwhile there was strong opposition to the prospective bridegroom from Loku akka that she expressed to mother and neighbours. The displeasure was caused by the dress he wore, a coat and cloth. Yet later she changed her mind, perhaps realizing that a man's goodness rests on his qualities and



Photo 67:
Kalawane aiya and Loku akka

not in his apparel. Really, this Gunadasa aiya who we later addressed as Kalawane aiya, was a very honest man of high moral behaviour. One can call him clever but not crafty. He worked in W. Piyadasa & Bros. Company. Piyadasa aiya was his elder brother. Before marriage he began his own business in Kalawana town.

The wedding between Esilin Sumitra and Kalawane aiya took place in our temporary abode at Meddekande. That was our first family wedding. The house was repaired, new dresses sewn and invitations were sent to those closest to us.

From the maternal side many relations came from Colombo. From father's side, only Bappa, two aunts and Siri aiya were there. Once the legal matters were attended to and all rituals performed, the new couple went to Balangoda for the photographs. Aiya also went with them. But since the crowd that went to Balangoda were late, those who came from Colombo made a fuss and this resulted in my parents blaming aiya as soon as they came back from Balangoda. Mother, with her quick temper, was behind it all.

Aiya went away in a huff and the couple soon departed. Putting on his coat and carrying his umbrella as he walked quickly out we tried to stop him but it was useless. For months after his hasty departure from Meddekande he used to send us post cards full of hard hitting verses. Here are a few verses from such a post card sent to Kalawana aiya:

"Crafty woman, your old mother-in-law
Can dig the eyes out of anybody
Wait and see, grumbling always
She will have schemes on your pocket
If you have two thousand
Begin the Contrathu (contract)
Ten thousand you can get in a month
No money, my baano (son-in-law), help me out
I want a fine Benaris saree and a jacket
And one of those long shaped wrist watches
Dear brother, this is naana (sister-in-law)
Whispering to you from a corner

For seven long years he carried on this warfare. But he was on good terms with me and Lalana, my punchi akka. When we went back to Unawatuna after the conclusion of the Second World War, aiya wrote a letter to me. Along with the letter was a photograph of aiya, on the back of which was scribbled this verse:

Seven long years ago
In the house at Meddekande
The parents lambasted this man
And chased him away

I read out this verse for my mother and aunts to hear and that made them weep. So I wrote back to aiya this verse:

Seven long years back
the image of a son
gripped their thoughts
And into tears they burst

That verse had a magical effect. On the next bus from Veyangoda to Unawatuna aiya came to our house. That was another wedding for us.

He was indeed a very humorous person. Once he informed the owner of a cow of the birth of a calf via this verse:

Your beautiful Keppee
who had a tummy like a barrel
Yesterday gave birth to a she calf
Her tail is white
And the tummy is black just like yours
It will be good
If you visit your daughter

Siri aiya remained for a long time in Anuradhapura indulging in bhavana (meditation) and finally fell ill. I brought him to my house at Maradana and then admitted him to the General Hospital. One day when I visited him there he told me, in an exhausted way yet smiling, that that night he would be leaving us. He got me to promise to inform his relatives of his demise only after the last rites were performed. That night I was taking part in a reception being

accorded to Mr. Maithripala Senanayake. It was organized by the Old Boys Association of Nalanda College. My driver Piyadasa came to the hotel where it was being held and informed me that Siri aiya had breathed his last. Immediately I went to hospital and took steps to remove the body that very night. At Borella Cemetery the last rites were performed in the presence of our immediate family members. Since Siri aiya was a bachelor, his death signalled the end of my paternal family line.

Kalawane aiya carried on his wholesale business while akka held the post of Registrar of Births and Marriages of Kukul Korale for a long time. Later they settled down at Habaraduwa with their children where akka procured a teaching appointment at Sri Sumanajothi Vidyalaya of Unawatuna. It was this eldest sister of mine who got Siyaneris Mudalali interested in building this school and handing it over to the State.

Punchi Akka Enters Ananda Balika and I Enter Buona Vista

At the time of Loku akka's wedding something else was going on: preparations to enter Punch akka to Ananda Balika Vidyalaya in Colombo. My mother's younger sister, our madduamma was, at this time, domiciled in 125, Temple Road, Kuppiyawatte off Maradana, having wed Emanis Mudalali, a flourishing businessman in the Pettah vegetable market. This couple convinced my parents of the importance of an education in the English medium, and so Punchi akka went off to Colombo triumphantly presenting little me with a challenge.



Photo 68: Punchi akka Lalana and Miss. Sujatha Kumarasinghe

I had passed the Junior School Leaving Examination before her though I was younger by 3 years. She had further earned her pass after a re-scrutiny of her papers. I was also the eldest son. Wasn't I too entitled to an English education? The issue churned not only within me but within the adults too. I was determined to get through my English Senior School Certificate Examination before Punchi akka.

Though SSC classes had commenced at Meddekande school I had a yearning to be in my own village now. My dream was to enter Buona Vista College first and then go on to Mahinda

College in Galle. By this time, father and Siyaneris mudalali were again close friends. So once when Siyaneris Mudalali was going back home, I joined him and went back to Unawatuna. Having slept in his Walawwa (mansion) that night, the next morning I partook of kiribath (milk rice) made of kekulu (white) rice and went home. Rosi akka was at that time looking after our house. By the time Siyaneris baappa (uncle) returned to Opanaike, I was at home.

This was mid-March of 1943. Lionel, the son of William Singho, our front house neighbour (of whom I have written earlier) was then a student of Buona Vista. Accompanied by him I went to the school and asked the Principal whether I could enter the school. He gave me all the details of the class I would enter, the fees to be paid and the admission form. I said that I would get my school leaving certificate from Meddekande and left the place happily.

It was after Sinhala New Year that I returned to Unawatuna with two aunts. I was sad to leave Meddekande where my adolescent days were spent but the desire for an English education and the yearning to follow in my sister's footsteps balanced my love for the upcountry village.

With Lionel, I went to my new school known then as Buona Vista Boys' English School. After having paid my fees I entered a class known as Special 1. The class teacher, a Miss Amerasinghe, was a middle aged lady. All subjects were taught in English and since I had passed the Junior Examination, I had no problems here. English was the only new subject.

Buona Vista was then located in an area called Opathawatte. Past the rail crossing by the Eramudugaha Junction about half a mile along the Kalahe road was a complex of old buildings which was the venue of the school, headed by Mr. D.W. Weerasinghe. His mode of transport was a bicycle and his wife, a fair, slim and short lady, was the art teacher for the school.

The buildings acquired by the State for war-related services were given back to Buona Vista some time later. During the move back, we lads enjoyed loading the school furniture onto lorries. A master at this time, Mr. Manawadu indulged in all out

caning of the boys and accidentally caned me too. It was my first experience of a caning that I never forgot. Later when we were colleagues on the staff, the memory of it caused us much merriment.

From Special 1 class I passed on to Special 2. A teacher I well remember from this time was Mr. Gerald de Alwis who, after his student days at Richmond College, joined the Buona Vista staff. He visited our house many times. Later he became a Social Services Officer.

Not long after the school moved back to its earlier premises, I left Buona Vista to join Mahinda College.

On to Mahinda College of Galle

Mr. K.W.J. Karunaratne whom we addressed as Talpe Mama (uncle) was a frequent visitor to our house. He worked under Mr. D.P. Daluwatte at the Fiscal office of Galle Fort. It was he who brought me an application form for admission to Mahinda College, signed as my guardian and got me to sit the admission test. I had done so well on the test that when I went to inquire about the results, the Principal, Mr. E.A. Wijesuriya, informed me that I had placed first in the examination.

My admission to Mahinda College was a dream come true. I entered the school in January 1946 into the 6th Standard A, also known as Form 1A. As I recall, on the same day the sons of Mr. Abayawardena, the head of Katukurunda Dharmika Vidyalaya, Piyadheera and D. N. Abayawardena, and Wilson Devasiri Narayana also entered the school.

Among those in my class were those who graduated to the following positions later: Dr. Sanath Mahanama Gunasekera, son of Mr. D.S. Gunasekera who was Social Minister then, Dr. Udayapala De Silva. Prof. J.K.P. Ariyaratne, Prof. Dharmasena De Silva and Mr. Wimalasena De Silva, Police Superintendent and head of Katukurunda Police Training school. Somasiri Ambawatte was also in my class.



Photo 69:
Mr. E.A. Wijesuriya



Photo 70:
The Mahinda College

Though my home was just 4 miles away from Galle, the idea that I was a rustic village boy was ingrained in me. These boys were all dressed in the most sophisticated urban apparel. Their closed shoes, polished carefully, just radiated lustre. They

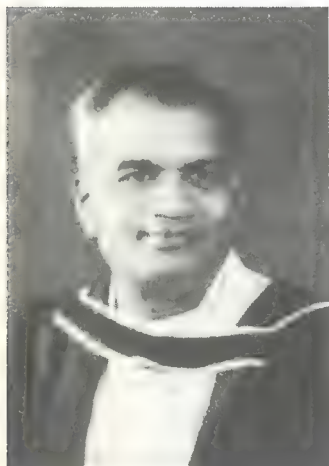


Photo 71:
Peter Danthanarayana,
a teacher at Mahinda College

spoke fluent English and I sensed that English had even become their language at home. Their family members were all dressed in European style. Naturally all these factors instilled in me an inferiority complex that was moderated somewhat by the Abaya-wardena boys who more or less shared my background.

Mr. A.D.S. Jayawardena was our form master. He was dressed in a European-style pristine white suit and he sported a tie. Fair, short and stout he looked rather fierce but later I realized that his looks were deceptive and that he embodied all the ideal qualities of an excellent teacher.

After we had greeted him with "Good Morning," the master surveyed us for a brief moment. Then in beautiful handwriting, he wrote on the blackboard the name of the class and the date. He then requested all the students to give their names and the village they hailed from, using the English language.

When one student said "I am from Hambantot" Mr. Jayawardena burst out in Sinhala, "You, donkey, not Hambantot, but Hambantota." I have admired this master ever since for pronouncing our place names in the native way.

The school assembly was held in the mornings in Olcott Hall, and providing a venue for training no Mahinda student will ever forget. As the first bell rang the students from Form A class began to fill the hall followed by those of forms B,C,D, and those of standards 7, 8, 9, 10. Then the first and second class University-prep (UE) students, and the Prefects (student leaders), who occupied the front row, entered. Finally the teachers entered and sat on the stage.

Then the second bell rang, the signal for the appearance of the Principal. As the tuk-tuk-tuk sound of his shoes increased its tempo, a dead silence descended on the hall. He walked between the rows of students, ascended the steps to the stage and stood at the table covered by a blue velvet cloth. The teachers and pupils stood and greeted him with folded hands and sat down, then the Principal also sat. He got up again and gave the signal for observing Pansil (five precepts) by folding his hands, and this motion was followed by all others. The school head at this time was Mr. Edgar Wijesuriya who used to recite the Pansil out loud, a practice we soon followed.

Next a brief speech and notices were delivered by the Principal. He had a habit of talking very clearly and pronouncing



Photo 72 :
Mr. A.D.S. Jayawardena

the English words carefully, making it very easy for us to emulate him.

As he read out the name of each class, that class departed, then the staff and he left the hall. The training I received in this school assembly was as important as the education I received in the classes at Mahinda.

Then, as now the 6th standard is a class at a very significant cross road. A student in this class is in his adolescent stage, having gone through five formative years that prepare him for later education. In this class he launches on a quest for knowledge with acute insight.

We were fortunate enough to have Mr. A. D. S. Jayawardena as our class teacher at this stage. He was not only our class teacher but the subject master in many subjects such as English literature, arithmetic, algebra, geometry. Hence there was close association between him and the pupils, facilitating the guidance process.

There were 14 subjects in our 6th standard curriculum. Buddhism, English language, English literature, English dictation, Sinhala language, Sinhala literature, Pali, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, general science, history, geography and art. I remember Mr. Johnny Jayawickrema who taught Sinhala, Mr. Wilmot Silva who taught Buddhism, Major Simon Wijeratne who taught geography, Mr. U.G. Handy who taught Pali, Mr. Mel who taught art and Mr. E.R. de Silva who taught general science.

At the end of the 1st term I had obtained an average of more than 75 % in all the subjects and so became first in class, scoring 100 marks more than the one who came second. I gained recognition after that. There were a few girls too in our class who were daughters of the teachers. They occupied the front rows. Among them was the elder daughter of the principal, Mohini Wijesuriya, the two sisters Thilaka and Karuna Abeysiriwardena and Malverine. I too got a seat in a front row in recognition of my disciplined ways.

Reports of students who came first in class were handed over to them by the Principal on the day before the vacation in the Olcott Hall. The report with the highest average in the whole school was given last amidst much applause. This I got and the

applause was really immense. My inferiority complex just evaporated after this. Soon I was speaking very fluently in English too. Except for one term when I fell ill I maintained a consistent record of coming first in class.

The class teacher of the 7th standard was Mr. M. S. Jayawickrema. He used to address me as Putha (son) or Tudor or A.T. He found a warm place in my heart due to the way he taught English. He was never in a hurry to end

one lesson and begin another one. Sometimes for the whole term he taught only 3 or 4 lessons. In a very relaxed way, he devoted several days to one lesson, with the air of one who was not very serious about his work. But it was after I became a teacher that I realized his genius. He taught the child, not the subject. The subject got taught by itself.

The class teacher of the 8th standard was Mr. Simon Wijeratne, who was a major in the Cadet platoon. He had assigned me the preparation of a class library. I read every book collected for this library. He once told us that we should read a book not connected to our exam at least half an hour every day, which practice I yet observe.

A master of Kerala ethnicity, Mr. Rama Krishnan was our 9th standard master in the first term while Mr. Vinnie Vitharana took over in the second and third terms. A young man then, he interacted with us like a friend, joining us in sports and all our trips and pilgrimages. He encouraged me to contribute some articles to newspapers and magazines.

Mr. U.G. Handy, who was our 10th standard class master, taught us only Buddhism.

The success that I experienced in the classes up to the Senior School Certificate form I did not have in the University entrance class due to two factors: my school environment and my



Photo 73: Mr. J. H. Gunasekera, who headed Mahinda College



Photo 74: Staff of Mahinda College, 1951

family environment. While pursuing my studies, I never deviated from extra curricular activities both in school and in the village society. Loving the game of cricket, I was a member of the school cricket team. Though I could not participate in the Mahinda-Richmond cricket match I was a reserve. I remember a singular incident in the field. Stanley Jayasinghe, later a famous Test Cricketer, at that time led the Nalanda cricket team. After scoring 111, he was declared out after I had caught a hard hitting ball from his bat.

What really happened was that the ball came in such a strong thrust that to protect my face I covered it with my palm and the ball just fell into my hands!



Photo 75:
Major Simon Wijeratne



Photo 76:
Prof. Vinnie Vitharana

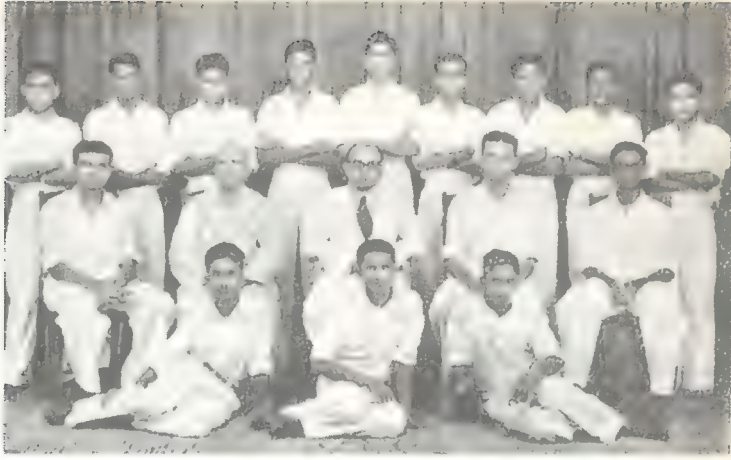


Photo 77: Cricket team 1951

I was a member of the school debating team too and once was praised by Mr. L.H. Mettananda, Head of Ananda College for a speech made at Ananda College. Never did I then bargain on the fact that later in life I would be speaking on the same platform with him and delivering 65 speeches for the cause of the Buddhist National Movement culminating with gaining the privilege of closely associating with him.

In these years, under the guidance of our class teacher, Mr. Vinnie Vitharana, we published a magazine named *Planet*, of which I was associate editor. I participated in school tours, pilgrimages, games and myriad other activities that put me in the path of knowing many teachers and many students.

I participated in the activities of the temple and sports activities of the village. As leader of the Peellegoda cricket team, I led the team against many other teams. I was also a very enthusiastic member of the Koswatte cricket club whose members were the three brothers, K.P.A., K.P.W. and K.P. S. Perera and the Silva brothers, Hemachandra De Silva, Premachandra De Silva and Gunachandra De Silva. These latter three and Somachandra De Silva, who later played for our national team, were the younger players in our team.

Into my memory float memories of many who kept in touch with me after I left Mahinda College and aided and abetted in Sarvodaya work. Among these are Mr. Basil Gunasekera, the Navy

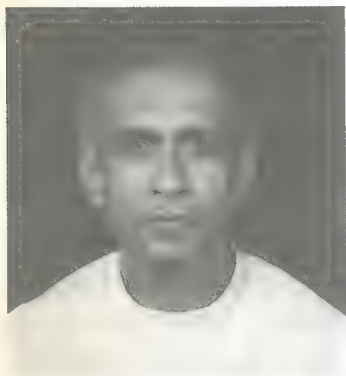
Photo 78: Contemporaries at Mahinda College



Prof. J.K.P. Ariyaratne



Prof. Nandadasa Kodagoda



Former Mahinda Principal
Mr. Daya Jayasundera



Former Mahinda Principal
Mr. B.K.de Silva



Mr. Daya Ananda Perera



Prof. W. G. Weeraratne



Photo 79:
After 54 years with
Prof. J. Ariyaratne



Photo 80:
Mr. Rupa Karunathileka



Photo 81:
Dr. Sanath M. Gunasekera

Commander-in-chief who studied in a higher form than his brother of Mr. Hugh Gunasekera, now a Bank officer, Mr. Gunapala Wimaladharma, a Dental Surgeon, Mr. G. De S. Jayasinghe, who was the leader of our cricket team and later worked in the Oils and Fats Corporation, Mr. P.L. Munidasa, Deputy Police Head, Minister Rupa Karunatilleke, Mr. Daya Ananda Perera, who worked as a Consultant of the Education Ministry and as its Deputy Director-General. He was also the General-Secretary of Sarvodaya Movement, others on this list include Prof. Nandadasa Kodagoda, the Vice Chancellor of Colombo University and Mr. W. G. Weeraratne, Chief Editor of the Buddhist Encyclopedia.



Photo 82:
Mr. Samarasighe



Photo 83:
Mr. G.M. Sumanathilake
de Silva

Photo 84: Navy
Commander Mr. Basil
Gunasekera and
Mrs. Gunasekera at
Meth Medura



A Bad Time Sets In

The first year in the University Entrance class I fared well in my studies. At this time my sister Lalana who was studying in Ananda Balika had left school and become a Primary school teacher at Mahinda. After staying up the whole night at a carnival held at Mahinda College she developed a mental complication. Other than the usual medication all modes of therapy in the village connected to the mystic arts such as *bali*, *thovil*, and even the chanting of pirith were enacted at our home but these all proved futile.

Father had begun a plumbago (graphite) mining business at Embilipitiya at this time but my sister's illness made him give it up and return. Finally the business was closed fully. Now economic problems in the family created a condition we had never encountered before. A decision that sister should be given Western treatment ended up with her being warded first at Fernando Memorial Hospital at Wellawatte and later at Sulaiman Hospital. Mother, Siri aiya of Veyangoda and I took turns staying with her in the hospital. Since all the family resources were expended to cure her malady, the family entered a very critical phase. The year 1952 saw us in this state. One day Mr. E.A. Wijesuriya, the school head, visited my sister. That caused me no happiness but agony since he had come to get her resignation letter as she was ill. Until she got well, she was to be considered as having left.

Sleeplessness, mental stress and studying in the midst of all this caused a perpetual headache in me. One Dr. Zaines, a Vienna specialist then working in the Galle hospital, instructed me not to concentrate on reading. Yet I prepared for the University

Entrance Examination in 1952 and could sit only for the physics paper. My headache prevented me from sitting for the other papers. I was called for physics practicals and was later informed that I had got through the subject.

Then began a period of disillusionment regarding my health, my mental condition and home environment. Even my best friends drifted away. Some of these I helped later. I decided to stay at home, find a job and help my siblings. This is a duty that falls on the eldest son in a family. At that time a contestant at an election who was already in power came home and asked for help. An ally of his gave me Rs. 2000 and asked me to spend it on the campaign. Though mired in trouble I was so against corruption that I threw the money in his face and cried out asking him to leave. My provocation was also due to the fact that, that morning I had witnessed them distributing liquor to their supporters in a Buddhist house.

But this news reached my principal in a distorted way. He summoned me and asked whether I was a Communist leader in the area. I told him that I had only followed his advice to be always averse to liquor and corruption and not to do politics as a student. Though he could not object to my answer, he was not satisfied with my defences. My devotion to him was ruptured that day and I began to wonder whether I could find ways and means of preventing situations like this where party and politics interfered with my life.

You Are a Communist?

I really got enthusiastic about communism at that juncture of my life and went in search of Sirisena aiya who was the only Communist I knew. I assumed a pseudonym as others in the movement did and joined as a temporary member. This pseudonym on the card given to me has slipped my memory. Reading all the books and magazines on communism in my possession, I tried to understand the philosophy. I went cycling for lectures whenever they were held, discussing the places where bridges and culverts (canal carrying water across under the road) were situated and how to bomb them in revolutions. In the meantime in a book I read on Joseph Stalin I came across the atrocities committed by him. I could not convince Sirisena aiya of the horror of it all. So when there was a motion at a meeting to collect 50 cents from each one of us to commemorate Stalin's birthday, I got up, declaring that I was not ready to celebrate a murderer's birthday, but that I was ready to give rupees for any cause of Dr. S.A. Wickremesinghe.

Karl Marx had preached a doctrine suffused with humanitarian ideals where he advocated a way of preserving human liberty and brotherhood by transforming the tendencies of humans alienating themselves from each other and from their own selves. But he had himself been murdered by these communists. Now highly embittered and disillusioned by all this information, I sank to the depths of frustration.

A Remedy for Economic Exploitation

During these days I used to cycle to school. Money for my expenses was sent to me by my uncle A.T.C. Jinadasa, who was at Talawakale. I spent less than 25 cents every day. One Monday morning as I was schoolward bound, I turned my bicycle towards Galle, and an aged female, probably one Alpinahamy, stopped me.

"Podi mahaththayo" (little master) she pleaded, "Give me 25 cents. I have no money to buy some rice."

Every Monday morning, for several weeks, this scene was repeated. One evening I was walking along the beach to Welle Devale when I saw the same woman busy knitting coir. I began to chat with her.

"Amme" (mother), I addressed her, and asked her how much she earns a week by her labour.

"Aney! Mahaththaya, I skin my palms for the whole week and get paid only 3 rupees a week," was her answer.

"To whom do you sell your coir? Who brings you the fibre?" These questions I asked the poor woman were the forerunner of an intensive research into the procedure of the coir industry in the area. Making a round of companies like E. Coates and Hayley, who bought the coir, meeting the middle men, visiting those who pulverized the husks and those who used hand machines, I amassed a wealth of facts on the subject.

Finally I concluded that while poor women like Alpina earned 3-4 rupees, the middle man or the broker, earned seven times that. There had to be a remedy somewhere.

To establish a Co-operative Society of Coir Makers seemed the ideal solution. I collaborated with Ven. Narada Vedananda Thero of our temple on the envisaged plan. The first meeting was held on the coast by the sea. About 80 exploited coir knitting females were present. A society was formed, with the monk Vedananda Thero becoming President, I became Secretary, and Parangiyawatte Maginona Amara-wickrema became Treasurer.



Photo 85:
Ven. Narada Vedananda Thero

For the first time in my life I exerted myself in the search for forms, accounts books, report books and regulations and other paraphernalia required to form a society.

The membership fees collected did not suffice for a Fund to commence work. Money was needed to buy fibre and machinery and to construct a building. The three of us with a few others met Siyaneris Mudalali, who donated money to us to buy machines and to put up a temporary shed.

The society got down to business. The women worked earnestly and I could see the direction I had to work now. After the first consignment of coir was sold and salaries paid, a young worker came a few days later in a brand new frock, a joyous sight indeed. Up to that day, she had been dressed in the same frock almost every day.

Aid from Siyaneris mudalali, a bit of cash now and then from father, my salary as a teacher at Buona Vista – these filled the coffers of the Unawatuna Coir Workers Co-operative Society. I was also successful in convincing Siyaneris Mudalali to build a permanent building for the business. As the chief guest for the grand occasion of the opening of this building, I invited Honourable Mr. Dudley Senanayake who had given up his premiership and was now away from politics. He accepted our invi-

tation and in a grand procession he came and opened up the building.

Making a speech on this occasion I invited him to begin a leadership devoid of politics and explore the possibility of a political system divorced from party politics. I advocated such a system prompted by a genuine aversion I had, by then, begun to develop towards the party system that was eroding our values.

In 1953, our society functioned very well. Yet neither the Deputy Co-operative District Commissioner of Galle nor the Officer of Rural Development knew the *modus operandi* of registering our society. They simply sent me from one officer to another.

Resurrecting a Samsaric Bond

I think that at this time, 1953, both the Rural Development Department and the Small Industries Department were under the Ministry of Home Affairs situated at Independent Square. Hoping to register our society I went there one day to meet the directors. I was not very familiar with the city of Colombo then. Occasionally I had come to Colombo for the Ananda-Nalanda cricket match, to take part in debates or to visit my punchi akka (younger sister) living in the abode of Romanis Nanayakkara at Slave Island or to visit Balamma (my mother's sister) at Temple Road, Maradana. That day too, I spent the night at Balamma's and asking directions, wended my way to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

What I needed was to meet the Directors, an almost impossible task at that time. The Blacks who had got into the White man's shoes diffused a grandeur and more arrogant aura than the latter and treated ordinary folk like dirt. It was with utter fright that I ascended the steps. That I had walked in the wrong direction I realized only after a door suddenly opened and I stared into the face of a person very familiar to me through newspaper photographs. He was none other than Mr. A. Ratnayake, the then Minister of Home Affairs. I had nowhere to turn. Now he addressed me in English.

"Son, whom are you looking for?"

My mind working fast I answered. "Sir, I came to meet Obathuma" (your honour).

He came toward me, and holding me by the shoulder, went back in to the room. Then he listened to me very carefully.

Summoning two high officers from the two departments, he gave instructions on my letter and gave a ruling that "Unawatuna Co-operative Coir Workers Society" should be duly registered under the Small Industries section. He also instructed that an officer co-ordinating the Co-operative Department and the Small Industries Department should be appointed. The happiness I derived from having encountered a minister on an official matter, of having entered a Ministry office and of having achieved success was just immense.



Photo 86:
Hon.Mr. A.Ratnayake

I never dreamt that years later that Hon. A. Ratnayake would become one of my closest friends and a counselling elder. The age gap between him and me was very wide. Hence I ascribe this to a resurrection of some samsaric connection – a connection engendered in the long trek of the cycle of re-birth.

Suspension of Education

My memory goes back to the year 1953 when teachers like P. Danthanarayana, Asoka Devendra, Vinnie Vitharana and Samarasinghe asked me not to get discouraged but to prepare for the UE exam. But a whole host of problems had erupted in my life, problems such as my sister's illness, economic difficulties, inability to sit the exam, displeasure shown by the principal for a political act not committed by me – all these almost overpowered me. Soon my



Photo 87:
Mr. Asoka Devendra

aims in life began changing. I became keen not to create a niche for myself in the ongoing faulty society but to dedicate my life to social reformation; to be more explicit, to endeavour to introduce justice and equality to a society lacking in them. A middle way had to be sought between the capitalist system and the communist system – both were cruel and unsuitable to our country. What should be the new path? Should it be sought through service?

At this time those who had tried to make a cat's paw out of me for their political gains and failed, had labelled me as a revolutionary and given such information not only to the school head but to the Police, too.

The school prefect post that should have come to me, went to another at this juncture. It happened this way due to a mere joke I made.

There was a magazine in the library that carried a photograph of Sir John Kotelawala and Dudley Senanayake. At this time a rumour had spread that there was disharmony between the two. Under this picture a friend of mine (who himself dabbled in politics and today is not even in the country) scribbled the line, "United they stand" in green ink. I wrote under that "Divided they fall". Then he almost grabbed the magazine from me and wrote again, "That will never happen." I again took the magazine and wrote "It almost happened".

The boy took the magazine and ran to the Principal's office. The Principal sent for me and lambasted me for writing on library magazines. When I said it was the other boy who began it he paid no heed but strictly admonished me alone.



Photo 88: Participating as the Chief Guest at the annual prize giving of Mahinda College.
Mr. Daya Jayasundera,
the Principal at the right



Photo 89: With the present staff of Mahinda College. At the extreme left is Mr. Wilvin Abeygunewardena and on my left is Principal Mr. Atukorale

To the University Through Life

Meanwhile due to food rationing trouble began in the country. A *hartal* (closing shops and offices as mark of protest) got going and curfew was declared. But since no apparent furor arose, I escorted a friend who had come to see me and walked with him along Galle Road to put him on a bus. I was returning at dusk. On the way I met some youths and I loitered there chatting to them. Just then the lights of a jeep fell on us. Police officers soon emerged from the halted jeep and came running towards us. All my friends began running helter-skelter while I stood rooted there. One officer placed his bayonet on my chest and asked me to lift my hands. I did so. Then another flashed his torch on me and recognizing me, said,

“A.T. Are you mad? Don’t you know that your name has been given as a revolutionary? Run home. Because I was here you are saved.” The Assistant Superintendent of Police who spoke that day was a classmate of mine up to Senior School Certificate form. He did not pursue higher studies but instead joined the Police service. I retraced my steps homewards in the pitch dark very silently. If not for the innate non-violence within me the militant youth insurgency would have been led by me that day.

As an alternative to facing life after entering the University I decided to enter the University through life that day.

I Enter the Teaching Profession

First I decided I must find a job. Alerted to a vacancy for a science teacher at Ahangama Sariputta Vidyalaya I sent an application and met the Manager. Saying that he was ready to accommodate me, he asked me to bring my certificates.

I asked for my school leaving certificate from the Principal at Mahinda College, which he declined, saying that he did not want me to disrupt my studies. I said that we were in economic doldrums, upon which he offered me a post as a teacher in charge of the 3rd standard in the Primary section. I could not refuse and for 3 months I worked as a teacher there. My usual lunch, a vadai and a cup of tea, were bought during this time by a friend, K.D. Danny.

I was not paid a salary and when I asked for it the Principal said that he was under the impression that I worked voluntarily. I told him that it was with difficulty we fed ourselves at home and again asked for my leaving certificates. He asked me to come after two months. I went away much distressed in mind.

Yet hope surged within me. A house on a hillock by our home became vacant. I rented it out for 20 rupees a month and began a private tutoring. Not only special English classes were held there but subjects such as English, mathematics and civics were taught to Senior School Certificate Exam. failures. The student enrollment



Photo 90:
Mr. Y.K.D. Danny

rose to 60. Many of them got through the exams and some of them are today in senior posts.

I went to the office the day that I was expected to call on him. That day he refused again to give my school leaving certificate and character certificates. Now I gained the courage and said that this was the last help I would be asking from him, that to start my life again I needed those documents. Next he wrote a general character certificate and gave it to me. I just shuddered with fury. Mr. Asoka Devendra was in office at the time. I got him to insert that I had achieved a First Class pass at the Senior School Certificate Examination with an exemption from the London Matriculation Examination. After the Principal gave me back my character certificates etc. I went on my knees and made obeisance. When he gave us our first lesson, he advised us to always carry a notebook and pen to write down anything new we learned. This I follow even now. I gave him my notebook to show how earnestly I had learnt what he taught. Then again I worshiped him and spoke out my thoughts sternly. I said that he has been misled in his attitude to me by selfish politicians and that one day I would make a success of my life in another way. Then I bade adieu to my dear teacher Mr. Edgar Wijesuriya and to Mahinda College, my alma



Photo 91: Meeting retired school head Mr. Edgar Wijesuriya and Mrs. Wijesuriya along with Mr. Dharma Goonesinghe at their residence

mater that I loved like my very life. Between Mahinda and Kadawatha bridge as I cycled home I was enmeshed in a thousand thoughts. I had pinned my hopes high on entering the university after school and never dreamt that I would be stranded on the road like this. Where did I err? It was as if everybody including my family was drifting away from me. Soon I sensed another bicycle approaching mine. In a very heavy voice the cyclist clad in coat, tie and trousers greeted me with a "Good morning, AT" and halted his cycle ahead of me. He was Mr. D.M.W. Weerasinghe, then head of Buona Vista College.

"Did you finish your University education?"

"No. Sir. I never went there." He was surprised by the answer.

I related to him my calamities. Looking kindly at me he invited me to work on the staff of Buona Vista Junior School from the next day as a science assistant teacher.

Roomassala Mountain and Life at Buona Vista

Buona Vista College was situated on the Western slope of Roomassala hill. The school was composed of two sections. The senior section facing the Kadawatha bridge was the main section, close to Galle-Matara road, while the Primary section was on top of the hill. Just like Unawatuna hill on which our own house stood, the Roomassala hill on which Buona Vista College stood was a fascinating terrain where, in our childhood, we had much fun roaming all over the lush foliage.

I once wrote the following set of verses to the Mahinda College magazine. The errors in this were corrected by Mr. Vinnie Vitharana.



Photo 92: Roomassala mountain

In days of yore in Lanka
 Raged the Rama – Ravana battle
 Hanuman, friend of Rama scoured the Himalayas
 Hunting herbs to cure the injured
 Roomassala,
 You encase this memory

 Fruit heavy canopy
 Wild blossoms adorn your beauty
 Crooned to sleep
 By the chirrup of birds
 You are indeed a queen
 Shedding lustre in the forest

 The angry waves of the ocean
 Beat on the coast
 And then disperse
 Onto your figure again the waves gush
 The emerging white froth
 Enhances your beauty
 Come rain, come drought
 The fountain cascading down you
 Acts so modest
 Spraying the forest with foam just to suffice
 no, wait, it is
 Milk oozing down your breasts

 That the island was
 Entrusted to God Saman for protection
 makes you confident
 So even defying the deep sea
 You further act our coastal guardian
 Our Senevi



Photo 93:
 The great poet Arisen Ahubudu and
 his wife Sandha Ahubudu

The great poet Arisen Ahabudu was then a handsome youth. Due to his erudition the youth of the area including me regarded him as a great teacher. He worked as a teacher in Mahinda Primary. I visited him to read the books in his possession and get my writings corrected by him. Anadapiya Kudathihi was also another in our group. A magazine called '*Ediya*' was printed in the printing press owned by Amarasena Ashuthosha, brother of Arisen. '*Ediya*' means courage and the motto carried by this magazine was that *Ediya* was developed to foster the *ediya* of children. The great poet Vellala Jayamaha was another who earned our respect and in the Hela Havula meetings conducted by these two poets we gained a vast knowledge of our country, religion, the indigenous culture and our language.



Photo 94:
Amarasena Ashuthosha

On March 17 in 1987, a felicitation ceremony was held in honour of Arisen Ahubudu at the SLFI (Sri Lanka Foundation Institute) which was chaired by the then Education Minister, Mr. W.J.M. Lokubandara. When I entered the Hall I was taken up the stage. While there I scribbled six verses on this scholar in my note book and when I was invited to speak all I did was to recite these verses:

With bowed head I revere,
This virtuoso performer in Hela language reawakening
Arisen Ahubudu, follower of Munidasa Kumaranatunga
I wish him
A life span of hundred years
The adolescent, Ahubudu I have known
The youth and middle-aged Ahubudu I have known
But yet
Ahubudu, so enigmatic eludes my vision
Still the grey hairs you have not seen
Like the king Muvadev,

But yet your household you have transformed
Into a sylvan hermitage, you are indeed a Bosath
Fulfilling
Your Paramee (perfections)

Thoughts of how in the fifties and sixties
You strove to instill Ediya, Courage into
Upcoming youth making them Ediyen
A teacher at St. Thomas you were
But you remain
An erudite pundit like Gurulugomi and Dhamsen
Ahubudu, see that this age ends
The age when alien ways of living reign
When literature and culture are tainted by money
When slavish minds have manacled our freedom
You are the spring of the resurrection
Of the Hela mind of the Hela language
Of the Hela ways
With the blessings of the Triple Gem
May you get the strength mental and physical
to continue your great service
for years to come

New Life

The teaching appointment at Buona Vista injected new life into my plummeting self-confidence. It also rejuvenated the social service arena in the village. I could now shoulder the burden of the family, help my sisters and brother, my mother and aunts.

Akka too was getting better in health and she was eventually married to a young man from Ginthota. His name was Sugathadasa De Silva. In Lalana akka's name Sirisena Jinadasa aiya of Veyangoda

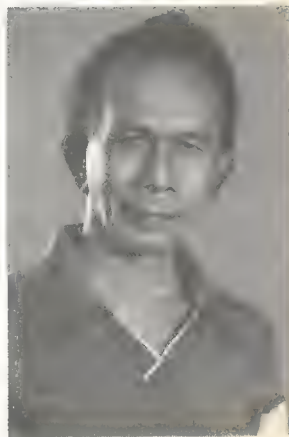


Photo 95 :
Mr. Sugathadasa De Silva

had bought a Gymkhana ticket and Swallow Tail, the horse with this ticket, won third place in the Derby race. And so aiya won the third prize, easing the financial problems in the family. But father, a foot pricked by a nail and himself now a diabetic patient was confined to bed at this time. All the machinery bought for plumbago mining at Godakawela had rusted and decayed. After recovery from his physical ailments, my father went for a small job and worked for Akolis Appu mudalali at Moneragala.

Into the Teaching Profession

On my first day at Buona Vista, Mr. Weerasinghe assigned to me the subjects in his time table, arithmetic and English. The first class I went to teach was the SSC class where many students were older than me. How could I control them: I wondered. Presenting the challenge of solving difficult sums. It proved

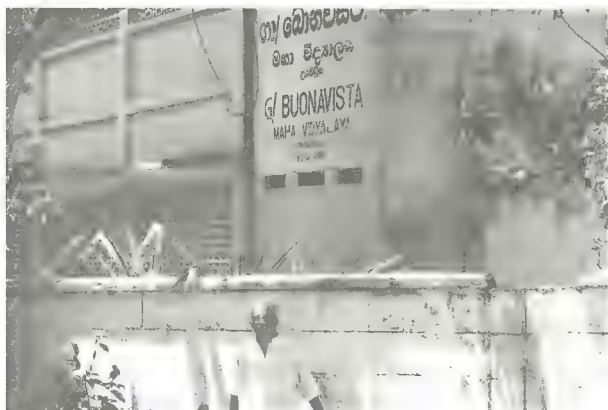


Photo 96:
Junior school, Buona
Vista College

successful. The youngest pupil in the class, P. Amerasinghe, who later joined Nalanda College, today is Deputy Governor of Central Bank. Miss Karuna Speldwine, who later joined the Civil Service, was also a student in this class. When the students felt that I knew my subject better than they, the control was gained and no issue of discipline arose.

Buona Vista then run as a private school belonged to the Church of England. Father Welikala was the Manager. Other than the few Christian children who lived at the orphanage on the hill and two Muslim students, all others were Buddhists.

Photo 97:
Primary School,
Buona Vista
College



Except for the Principal, his wife and a few teachers who were of the Protestant faith and a Roman Catholic teacher the rest of the staff was also Buddhist. The morning assembly there fascinated me. The Christian students prayed in the church at this time and the Buddhists took pansil in the open air. The Catholic teacher, too, was with Buddhists.

Many teachers on the staff such as Messers. D.W.C. Mohotti, Gunasekera, D.Y. Wijewickrema, Frank Wickremesinghe, P. Hettihewa, C. Manawadu, and Miss Sujatha Wickremesinghe became my close friends. Some evenings I spent at Mr. Weerasinghe's house playing games such as bridge and chess.

In 1955 I worked in the Primary section of Buona Vista, headed by Miss Guniangoda. Except for me all other teachers were female. Among them was Ms. Dayawathie, elder sister of Edwin



Photo 98:
47 years later
with Mr.P.
Hettihewa

Ariyadasa, Mrs. Silva, Miss. Chandra Karunaratne and Miss Abeyesiri Gunewardena. Later Mr. Devapriya Silva joined us.

Miss Guniangoda was almost a mother to us. Being the only male on the staff, many sweetmeats prepared by the female colleagues in their homes were lavished on me.

Really this period in my life was a very happy one. Whenever I had the leisure I used to climb to the hill top and feast my eyes on the ocean, the Galle harbour or the inland terrain running to the Samanala Peak. We worked like siblings in one family. The pay check was cashed by me and after that a treat was followed.

I must mention two incidents that took place at this time. Unlike in the upper school there was a tradition in the Primary school where, while the Christian students prayed, the Buddhist and Muslim students sang the national anthem. I wanted to curb this practice.

The Freedom to Follow One's Religion

The day came that I had to conduct the Assembly. I instructed the Muslim students to pray facing the mosque seen far away and the Buddhist students to worship the Bo tree just there and observe Pansil. Just then father Welikala was driving past. He came straight to me, tapped me on my shoulder as I was reciting Pansil and asked what I was doing.

"Can't you see what I am doing? I am practising my religion. Would you like to be disturbed in the course of practising your religion ?" I asked and went on reciting pansil. The father in a temper drove his car away. Soon I was sent for by Mr. Weerasinghe who said that I had violated school rules. I explained to them in a steady voice that all children should be allowed to follow a religion without which they could go astray. Subsequently the practice I had begun was perpetuated in the Primary school, a practice already begun by Mr. Mohotti in the upper school.

Now I had earned the label again as a revolutionary. But I was not perturbed, for the sense of justice and fair play were ingrained in me from childhood.

Playing the Role of Broker

I well remember some humorous incidents that took place at Buona Vista.

Once after school as I was walking down the mountain with another teacher, a friend who was also an old boy of Buona Vista was climbing up the hill. He got flustered at the teacher's sight and meeting me later, asked for particulars of her.

"Who was that beautiful lady walking with you?"

"Why? She is on the staff."

"Please introduce her to me."

"Why should I introduce a respectable pretty woman to one like you?"

"Please A.T."

"Do you think women are toys?"

"I am serious. I have been to see about fifty women now. Horoscopes don't match."

"Why? Is Mars in the Seventh House?"

"Yes."

"A partner is being sought for her too."

"So?"

"To talk about the rest, come home."

So saying, I cycled home. That very evening my friend came home and I felt he was adamant about the matter. I knew his family to be respectable. But I had seen him gulping a glass of beer at the Galle Sports Club. Getting a guarantee that he would be a teetotaler, I began my broker work and things culminated in a grand wedding. It was I who spoke on behalf of the bridal party at the wedding though I was not a relation of hers and I must say this was not an isolated instance when I played the role of broker.

Launching into an Economic Survey

I love to associate with educated people. There have been times when I have been deceived by bogus "learned ones" too. The imperialist fawning was so entrenched in us in our school days that ignoring those with a very profound knowledge in our own neighbourhood we used to look up to these bogus characters just because they spoke fluent English.

Yet whenever a lecture on some academic topic was held I used to attend it. That was how I found myself in the audience of a lecture on Economics at Galle Academy where the speaker was one T. G. Francis Pillai. He was introduced as a former lecturer at Cambridge University. Once he was directing an Institution called the School of Economics and Political Science in a house belonging to Mr. Bultjens situated on Nilwala river banks in Matara.

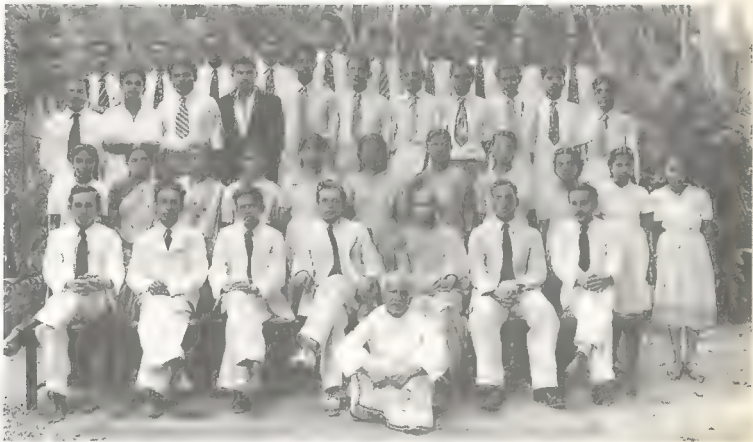


Photo 99:

Mr. Francis Pillai's class. I am in the last row first (left)

At the end of the lecture he questioned the veracity of a statement made by Sir John Kotelawala in England. Sir John Kotelawala had asserted that housewives in England had to pay a higher price for our tea not because of a tax imposed by us but due to the policy of brokers there. At that time it was a fad to discredit any theory put forward by Sir John Kotelawala, especially if one was a member of the so-called learned class. Mr. Pillai questioned the audience about the veracity of this statement to which all except me responded by saying that he was wrong. Mr. Francis Pillai stated that I was correct

Mr. Pillai had a Skoda car. On the way to Matara he gave me a lift home and came to our house. It was a week end and I accompanied him to Matara. He was married to a French lady named Jacqueline and had two boys named Nathan and Krishna.

White Coffee

Though I studied at Mahinda and taught at Buona Vista, the urban ways had not touched me yet. In fact Jacqueline was the first French lady I had ever spoken to. She asked me whether I liked tea or coffee. I replied "coffee." Then she asked, "Black or White?" flustering me. I had never heard about white coffee but without giving myself away I answered Black. It was later that I learnt that black coffee meant coffee without milk and white meant coffee with milk.

Having spent the night at the Pillai household I went to his



Photo 100: As a young boy at Maharagama Training College

School of Economics and Political Science the next day. I met Miss Hema Godawithana (later Mrs. Hema Athukorale) here for the first time. I listened to a lesson by Mr. Pillai. The Maths master Mr. Vigneshwaram being absent that day, I volunteered to teach for him.

Within these two days Mr. Pillai and I became close friends. That day applications were being sent to GCE Advanced Level Examination held by the London University. Since I already had my

London Matriculation Certificate I asked for an application form and told Mr. Pillai that I would like to sit that exam in the subjects of economics, economic history and British constitution. Laughing, he handed me a form. What others had covered in two years I had to cover in two months.



Photo 101:
Mr. D. W. C. Mohotti

On to Maharagama Training College

Every week-end I used to go to Matara and study for the exam I applied for. Meanwhile I sat for the Maharagama Teachers Training College Entrance Examination, too. The subjects were general science, arithmetic, Sinhala and English. Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe, once a student at Mahinda College along with me, who later taught at Richmond College, also sat for the examination.

We were both called for the interview. I was ill a few days earlier. I stayed the night at Sirimanna aiya's living at Battaramulla and in the morning went to the Training College. Those on the interview panel were Director of Education, Mr. S.F. De Silva, Principal, Mr. E.H. De Alwis and Mr. D.G. Sugathadasa, who succeeded him later. Mr. Alwis questioned me most. I knew I had got through the interview as I came out. In fact Sirimanna aiya seated in the verandah had heard Mr. Alwis commenting that I was eligible for entry.

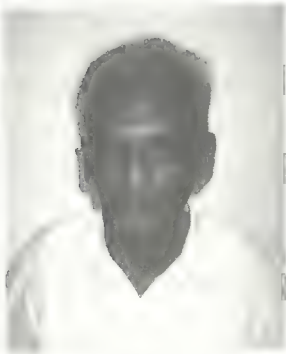


Photo 102: Mr. D. Y.
Wijewickrema

Two days after Mr. Gunasinghe got the letter of admission, I got mine. The staff held a party and bade me good-bye. My social activities in the village too came to a temporary stop.

The race ticket won by Siri aiya had eased the financial situation in the family.

He promised to pay my hostel fees every 3 months. Mr. Mohotti, Mr. Hettihewa, Mr. Frank Wickremesinghe and Mr. Wijewickrema of Buona Vista staff helped me with contributions of 25-50 rupees. With the help of everyone I entered Maharagama Teachers' Training College in January 1956 for training as a science teacher.

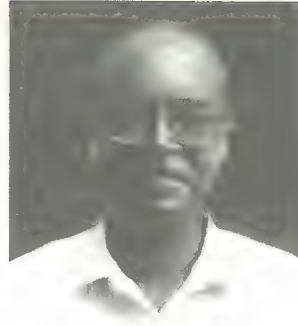


Photo 103: Mr. Frank
Wickremesinghe

The Two Years at Maharagama

The two years I spent at Maharagama comprised a period that not only moulded my future but helped to focus the direction of my life.



Photo 104:
Maharagama Government Teacher's Training College.

My childhood was spent in the village. During that period, all the love that a child needs was given to me by my mother and two aunts. I had three mothers in them. If they thrashed me with ekels (dried veins of coconut leaves), when I did wrong, it was not with anger but with love. They also gave me the optimum nutrition. I fell ill frequently in my childhood but their concern in getting Dr. Fred Abeysuriya of Galle to attend to me made me a much more healthy adolescent. Father and baappochchi (father's younger brother) both maintained the family financially that made

us heir to a life style that was neither impoverished nor luxurious. Before passing my seventh year, a foundation of a solid Sinhala Buddhist culture transcending all barriers of caste, race and religion had been laid in my life.

Our minds, not burdened or oppressed with a vast accumulation of facts forcibly imposed, just developed in a relaxed way as we played about with others our age. The pious, learned and wise monks in the village temple contributed much to the formation of our characters according to the norms of our indigenous culture. The temple, then completely uncorrupted, was in every sense a sacred place.

The adolescent period of my life was spent in Meddekande. I had passed the Junior School Certificate Examination as the youngest student in Ratnapura district. Hence, in receiving my further education, I exerted myself to gain proficiency only in the subject areas of English, Mathematics and Science. That I could spend my early youth in Mahinda and Buona Vista both schools in my home area, I consider a lucky factor in my life .

My actual youthful age began in Maharagama Teachers Training College. That a chum of mine from my small days, Dharma Gunasinghe entered the College along with me was a big encouragement to me. In every crisis, I sought his advice. Endowed with a better personality and more virtuous qualities than me, Dharma Gunasinghe was never envious of me but always strove to further my activities. Even today he continues this policy.

Maharagama Teachers College was replete with many organizations formed for extra curricular activities. I was a member of the Buddhist Society, Sinhala Literary Society, Scouts Platoon, Cricket team, Psychology Society and the Sinhala and English debating teams. I was also the English Editor of the college magazine. Yet I strove to fill a deeply felt deficiency in this network – the lack of a Social Services Organization. The inaugural meeting of this society formed under my pioneership was attended by



Photo 105:

Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe

very distinguished persons as the Most Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Mahanayake Thero, Director of Education Mr. S.F. De Silva, Deputy Inspector-General of Police Sydney De Zoysa, and District Judge S.R. Wijethileka. I became the Society's First President. The advice given by a very close friend of mine, Mr. D.A. Abeysekera, Rural Development Assistant in this venture, proved very beneficial.



Photo 106:
Mr. Cyril Ekanayake

The following subjects, physics, chemistry, botany, politics, psychology and agriculture were taught by Mr. A.T. Karalakulasinghe, Mr. Edward, Ms. Snell, Gerald Cooray, Hilda Peiris and Percy De Zoysa respectively. English was taught by Mr. Alfred Tambimuttu and Mr. Douglas Walatara. Physical education was taught by Mr. Duncan White of Olympic fame who was also in charge of Mahamegha Hostel. Sinhala was taught by Mr. Senerath Wanigathunga and Mr. P. Thenabandu. Mr. Cyril Ekanayake, the present Sarvodaya Secretary and Mr. P. Subasinghe were the lecturers of vocational subjects. The Registrar was Mr. Sugathapala De Silva, who later became Administrative Secretary of Sarvodaya.

Since my days at Mahinda had quite equipped me with the knowledge of science and maths, I did not have to exert myself academically at this College, leaving me with ample time to indulge in a myriad of society work and cricket. I was both Secretary and a foremost player in the Cricket club. My scoring 87 not out in a match against the Colombo Municipality team was the high water mark in my cricket career and I excelled in balling there. Mr. Pakkiam of Batticaloa, noted for fast bowling, and Mr. Ralph Alles, later head of D.S. Senanayaka Vidyalaya, too, were on our team.

We played many matches on our grounds at Maharagama. Our captain was K.P. Casinader and Vice-captain was C.S. Pakkiam. Some of my team mates were J.V. Ambalavanar,

Ralph Ignatius Tyronne Alles, Fabian Fernando, L.D. Premaratne, N. Balasuriya, D.C. Fernando, Austin Fernando, M.C. Gunetileka and Somaratne.

I first met Mr. D.A. Abeysekera at Maharagama Training College. His lecture delivered in May 1956 on "Development of underprivileged villages" on the invitation of the Buddhist Society appealed to me. Through it an interest in the underdeveloped tribes of Sadol, Kinnara and the Veddahs was ingrained in me. I got his address and the very next day went to his house at Battaramulla.

His wife was a teacher. They had a son and daughter named Ranjan and Nilanganie. Mr. Abeysekera's mother and sister, Ms. Malathie Wickremeratne too were there. I soon became a close friend of the family.

After conducting an extensive dialogue on social development with Mr. Abeysekera I volunteered to help him in his activities. As a first step I set up a Social Service League at Maharagama. Lectures were delivered at this society meetings by prelates like Most Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Mahanayake Thero and laymen as Education director, Mr. S.F. De Silva. Our maiden venture was teaching English at the Children's Home in Pamunuwa. We also began some developmental work in Dunwatte colony in Castle Street. An incident that occurred there I well remember.

Once I visited Dunwatte with about 25 female trainee teachers to conduct research into their socio-economic status. One of them complained of thirst. I went into one of the colony abodes and taking a coconut shell, poured water from a pot and drank it taking some water to her in the same shell. While she was drinking the water, I had a jibe at her asking whether she knew whose water she was drinking. Suddenly remembering that we were working in a so-called out-caste society the shell fell from her hand in shock. And her eyes turned upwards and she began



Photo 107:
Mr. D.A. Abeysekera

to faint. I soon laid her on a verandah of one of the houses and trying to hide what had taken place said that she had fainted through exhaustion. A reporter from the Observer took a photograph of her and flashed it in the newspapers under the caption. "Social service worker faints at seeing the traumatic living conditions of the Rodiya people."



Photo 108:

Camp held at Pamunuwa off Maharagama in 1956

This incident did not end there. The next day as I was returning to Maha Megha hostel from classes, I saw a fellow student on a verandah with a raised pole. Soon, he struck me on my leg with great force. I fell down and was even unconscious for some time. Further blows on me had been prevented by some other students. I could walk again only after a week and that only after remedial treatment.

The youth who had struck me was that trainee's lover. They both hailed from so called aristocratic families bloated with their social status. Later, both of them became my good friends and their very attitudes changed.



Photo 109:

The teacher who fainted at Dunwatte

Mr. Abeysekera used to take me on many of his field trips. One of his laudable habits was to take along his wife and children and sister on these trips. I was a family friend of theirs for about three years but for some reason after the Manawa International Camp our association ceased.

Approach to Literature

Many were the experiences I gained as a student of Maharagama Government Training College. Now and then I recollect some of these experiences. One such incident came to my mind by reading a series of articles published highlighting the need for a common national vision.

On my first day at Maharagama Government Training College I met a second year trainee, a female about 10 years older than I. Actually I had known her before, as her younger brother and I had been class mates at Mahinda College in Galle. I had often visited their home and we used to address each other as “akka” (elder sister) and “malli,” (younger brother) and this habit that still continues. Many in the college were of the opinion that we were siblings.

The culture we were bred in naturally spawned such endearing relationships. Love affairs between males and women older in years than them were never condoned by our society that had inbred in us a discipline to consider such relationships almost a taboo. Further, traditional mores nurtured by Buddhism never approved of erotic sexual relations outside wedlock. So naturally the *Hela* (term used in ancient books for Sinhala) ethos of life had ingrained in our minds, the ability to discriminate wisely the sentiments of love, sex and eroticism. Our literary traditions too were formulated on this mental fabric. Our early fictional literature aptly illustrate this tendency.

Among the pioneers of Sinhala novelists was A.T.C. Jinadasa of Unawatuna, younger brother of my father, my “baapochchi.” Some of his novels were “*Jayaratne or the Brave Boy Scout*,” “*Thilaka or the Brave Damsel*,” “*The Everlasting Vengeance of Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law*,” “*Sweet life or Nellie and Kamala*,” “*Badra and the Step-Mother*,” and “*The Bachelor*.” We had not only perused them as supplementary school readers but have had discussions with bappochchi on these novels.

We were a keen audience to bappochchi as he held forth with adults who visited our house or whenever we visited Talawakele during school vacations when he indulged in conversation with other elders. We were never chased out as what was being discussed was “Not adults only” stuff. Literature was a topic that the whole family could sit around and talk about.

We also read with relish works of famous novelists such as Piyadasa Sirisena, W.A. de Silva and Martin Wickremesinghe.

On November 5, 1956 as I entered the College premises “akka” presented me with a parcel. It was a birthday gift. I thanked her, went to the hostel and untied the parcel that contained a pair of shoes of my size and a new book, a novel that I began reading almost instantaneously. I just went on reading it till its end. Actually I was intrigued, then surprised, by the episodes enacted in that book and the way the particular characters behaved.

What is the boundary line of male-female relationships? It is ‘*vili biya*’. This is the Sinhala term for a state of mind, a term that almost defies translation but can be approximated to “abhorrence of indecency”.

Once this “*vili biya*” is violated, humans are as fetterless as animals in their behaviour. Scholars describe a human being as one who has developed his or her mind. The “*vili biya*” disciplines us and moderates our behaviour and makes us distinguish correctly our fathers, our daughters, our mothers. In *Ummagga Jathaka* there is a story about choosing a young queen for king Vedeha. There was an issue as to the choice between the daughter and the mother who was lovelier than the daughter, and Pundit Mahaushada says, “Messing up relationships is evil”.

When man or woman begin to display animal behaviour this “*vili-biya*” takes flight. How did a sexual liaison between a father-in-law and a daughter-in-law and his own son, become serious theme for a novel?

This type of literature, built on Western norms, came to be dubbed “*Thathvika literature*,” or realistic literature. “*Kama mithyacharaya*” or wrong sexual relationships are placed on the altar by the writer.

In one of these books that slavishly imitate Western writings is an instance where erotic feelings of a son are aroused by the nudity of his own mother.

The Sinhala reader had been stranded in the wilderness by norms of such Sinhala literary criticism that propounded the theory that books focus on such instances and episodes laid the true foundation of a modern Sinhala literature. The bandwagon that eulogised this literature branded Piyadasa Sirisena’s books as propagandist literature and W.A. De Silva’s novels as carbon copies of Western novels. What was the outcome of these yardsticks of Sinhala literary criticism? It gave birth to a generation of young people growing up in a vacuum utterly unaware of their roots.

Today the whole society of Sri Lanka is suffering due to these beings who have broken away from their cultural roots.

Our great writer, Martin Wickremesinghe published his “*Japan kama katha hewanalla*” (“The shadow of Japanese erotic literature”) bringing into focus this mistaken approach to literature. The frenzy of lust engendered is today publicly displayed. One repercussion is that woman has plummeted from her sublime role as a mother to a mere toy to be used in society’s sensual pleasures.

By the time these writers indulge in their confessions about their early literary output and try to get away from their guilt by pronouncing literature to be some sort of a cathartic process (what these writers describe by the term “*hava areema*” - (getting rid of the pellicle). All the damage has been done by the time they realise what they had done.

Social forces that devour young generations are a common occurrence, rampant then and now. The book that “*akka*” (elder

sister) gifted to me I returned to her. Expressing her apologies for that peculiar gift she had explained that she purchased the book after reading a newspaper review raving over the book as a progenitor of new trends in the art of novel-writing.

Here it must be said that critics who, either due to personal affiliations or to champion the styles and strategies of a certain literary faction to which they belong, dig deep canyons for the unsuspecting reader. It was this background that spawned anonymous writings as "*Sahitya kollaya*" (Rape of literature) by critics writing under pseudonyms as Vamsanatha and Deshabandu. Actually what we need is not phenomena like "literary gangs" fighting with each other nor fanatic literary views but a neutral dialogue on the subject that makes feasible the proper understanding of "Literature". I advise those who hold discourses on the need for a common national vision to look back and tap their own hearts. Such a process would be more meaningful. What we need is a national vision that is not at loggerheads with a universal vision. That these writers fail to realize that even at this late stage is a national catastrophe.

We are not devoid of a national vision. But that vision, according to some, is not synonymous with a narrow tribal vision or a religious vision. It is a universal vision entailing a very broad approach. But it has the potential to appease the needs of the total nation. In the first half of 1962 I published in the Sarvodaya newspaper a series of articles entitled "A common national vision" and sought to elucidate the Sarvodaya philosophy through it.

Maybe those who were responsible for books such as the above publications neither had the time nor the inclination to read my writings. They may also have neither the urge nor the leisure to survey at least one village out of the ten thousand villages where the Sarvodaya philosophy has metamorphosed in a live and practical way. They also choose to remain mum to the adulation of this programme by foreigners.

Thirsting for a Wide Knowledge

I once took Mr. Augustine Tambimuttu's Advanced English Course. Siyaneris baappa once came to College and queried, "Son, what books do you need?" I handed him the lists of books prescribed by Mr. Tambimuttu. On the way back to Opanayake he handed me these books bought at an exorbitant sum. This enabled me to master the English verse and prose books written from the time of Chaucer up to that of D.H. Lawrence.

Half my salary was paid to me at this time. My habit of buying books had made me the owner of a large number of Sinhala and English books but a boy related to me had stealthily sold them one by one to an old bookshop called Vicks at Maradana. Twice after this Siyaneris Baappa came to the College. On the first occasion he took me in his car to attend the cremation of Pelene Vajiragnana Mahanayaka Thero and on the second occasion to attend the ceremony that conferred the Mahanayaka post to young Pannaseeha Thero.

Siyaneris baappa now wished me to contest a seat in our area in the 1956 elections as a candidate from the UNP. I declined saying I wished to see a change in the pattern of contemporary politics but that for the present I would support Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in order to defeat the ruling party. That surprised him. I told him that the causes I was fighting for were the preservation of our independence, the purity of our culture and the upliftment of the disadvantaged class and that my ultimate aim was a paradigm of politics with people's participation that transcended party politics.

Siyaneris baappa did not visit me after this for months but when he invited me down to Opanaike this time it was for a match he had arranged for me. This too I kindly refused. Just like my father I never hankered after power and riches. Justice and fair play are greater to me than riches.

Every week we used our societies to invite famed politicians and academics to address us. Among them were ecclesiastics as Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Mahanayaka Thero, Narada Maha Thero, Gnanasatta Thero and Gnanasiha Thero and those who strode the political arena as Dr. N. M. Perera, Dr. Colvin R De Silva, Dr. S.A Wickremesinghe, Pieter Keuneman, Dudley Senanayake, G.G. Ponnambalam, M.D. Banda, A. Ratnayake, educationalists as Dr. E.W. Adikaram, Judge S.A. Wijethileka, Mr. S.F. De Silva, Prof.. K.N. Jayatileka, Prof. J.E. Jayasuriya and writers like D.B. Dhanapala, Tarzie Vittachchi, Meemana Prematileka.

I got to know all of them personally.

Joining the Nalanda Staff

The years 1956 and 1957 I spent at Nalanda College were consumed not only with studies but with the activities of the Social Service League, the Buddhist Society and the Cricket Club.

Once I was walking towards the grounds with a cricket bat in hand when I heard a clap. It was our principal Mr. D.G. Sugathadasa signalling me to come. When I went to him a well built person of majestic bearing garbed in national costume, his hair combed back and whose initial sight endeared him to me was asked by my principal to get my consent if possible. The statement perplexed me. Then I learnt that he was Mr. M. W. Karunananda, Principal of Nalanda College. He questioned me directly.

"Would you like to join the Nalanda staff?"

"Yes, sir," was my instant answer.

"How did you decide so suddenly?"

"Immediately I saw you I took a liking to you, sir. Since I am of small build I like well built people and all my decisions have been sudden."

"Don't change your mind later," Mr. Sugathadasa said. "No fears there, Sir," I assured him.



Photo 110:
Mr. M.W. Karunananda

"I will send you a letter," Mr. Karunananda said. The interview was over. I shook hands with Mr. Abeykoon who was there with Mr. Karunananda and left.

"You are lucky to have got him," I heard Mr. Sugathadasa say.

A few days later I received a letter from Mr. Karunananda dated October 17, 1957 that I had been selected to be part of the Nalanda staff. My first Indian tour took place shortly thereafter.



Photo 111:
Mr Dharmasena Senanayake



Photo 112:
Mr. M.A. Tillakaratne

I really considered the entry into the Nalanda staff very lucky. Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe, who had opted to join Dharmaraja College earlier, also joined Nalanda. On the same day I assumed duties, Mr. Kamal Dissanayake, an old Royalist who had obtained his degree in science, also joined the staff. Senior teachers like Mr. Dharmasena Senanayake, Professor Tulie De Silva, Mr. L.P. Wijesundera and Mr. M.A.

Thilekeratne proved to be very pleasing companions. Life at Nalanda was indeed very pleasant.



Photo 113:
Mr. Kamal Dissanayake

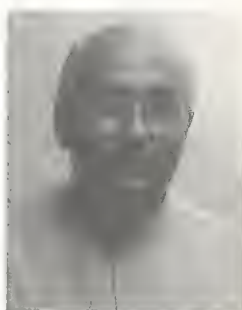


Photo 114:
Prof. Tulie De Silva

Photo 115: School Principals of Nalanda College from 1925 to 2000



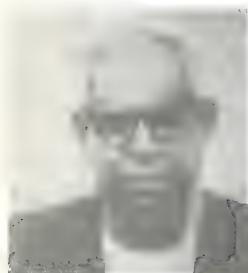
Mr. G. P. Malalasekera
1925 - 1927



Mr. J. K. W. Perera
1927 - 1928



Mr. J. N. Jinendradasa
1928 - 1947



Mr. D. C. Loris
1947 - 1952



Mr. M. W. Karunananda
1956 - 1962



Mr. K.M.W. Kuruppu
1962 - 1963



Mr. D. J. Edirisinghe
1963 - 1964



Mr. Gunapala Wickremaratne
1964 - 1969



Mr. Sugathadasa Atukorale
1969 - 1982



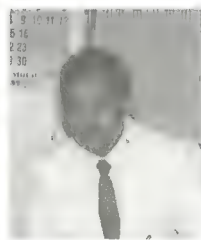
Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe
1982 - 1990



Mr. D. G. Sumanasekera
1990 - 1992



Mr. Edward Ranasinghe
1992 - 1999



Present Principal
Mr. Hemantha Prematilake

Three 'Marakas' or Deadly Dangers Ahead

That there would be a re-awakening of Buddhism in the aftermath of the 2500th anniversary of Lord Buddha's passing away was a widely held belief that I shared. At that time I was a student of Maharagama Government Training College and I had planned to spend that particular Wesak Poya (Annual Celebrations of the Birth, Enlightenment and Passing Away of Lord Buddha) at Anuradhapura.

On the 2500th Buddha Jayanthi year another common belief was that a person by the name of Diyasena would "appear " to spearhead the resuscitation process. A person called Mr. Munidasa Abeywickrema from Galle used to go from house to house spreading this message. Many helped him in the dissemination of this message and along with him observed Sil on Poya days to entrench all this interest. I must not forget Mr. D.S. Gunasekera here. He was once Minister of Cultural Affairs. I regularly listened to the sermons of this duo. Another religious figure appealed to me. He was Mr. P. Attygala, who headed the Galle Academy of Higher Studies.

Meanwhile one Mr. Ponnampereuma from Beruwela, the oldest student at GTC, read my horoscope and predicted that three deadly dangers awaited me in the coming fortnight. Having not much faith in astrology, I just laughed.

I was to take the night train to Anuradhapura. Many students had already left. There were two Tamil students left behind. One was Mr. Sitambaram who later became head of Matale Hindu College and the other, Mr. Balasubramaniam, who headed a Tamil Teachers' College later. Having kept some water to boil to have a cup of Nestomalt I went into the bathroom for a bath. Hearing the water boiling I wrapped myself in a towel and came out and was about to remove the plug when I was thrown back by an electric

shock. The boiling water dripped down my leg. Hearing the din, both of my Tamil friends came running and administered first aid to me, our knowledge as scouts helping us. I had jumped over the first hurdle predicted.

I went to Fort Railway Station that night to take the train. The only material things I took were an extra sarong, an extra shirt, a towel, sheet, a tooth brush and a shawl. For breakfast I had three hoppers and a plantain and a cup of tea after which I went straight to the rocky bed that I spread between the Sri Maha Bodhi and Ruwanweli Chaitya. I had good sleep on it and then I had a bath in Malwathu Oya. I was walking back through a heap of paddy husk when my feet began to feel hot. Then I realized that my feet had begun to burn leading to the further realization that the heap of paddy husk was burning inside. I was then foolish enough to go and immerse my burning feet in the waters of Malwathu. Boils erupted immediately. And in pain I walked towards the Sri Maha Bodhi temple. A young monk not only gave me some oil to apply to my injured feet but even gave me a nook of a room to lie down. He also taught me how to use a well that was "locked up". That night I slept at the Sri Maha Bodhi temple. The following day was Poya (full moon).

Next day with tens of thousands of devotees I too observed Sil. I was soon in the company of a Mr. Piyasena, a State officer of Anuradhapura and his friends and a Mr. Kumarasinghe from Mihiripenna.

Together we took part in many religious rituals.

Night came and we sat before the Southern Gate of the Ruwan Weli Chaitya compound. The whole area was a sea of heads. The stillness of the night canopied by a sky where the full moon shone in brilliance was only broken by the "Saadhu" cries of the devotees.

At that time there was much interest in the group of monks known as Thapasa Hamuduruwo, the hermit monks. A group of them had congregated before the Southern gate. There were some who considered this group as a tool of the Catholic Action sent to ridicule the Buddhist monk fraternity and make a mockery of the Buddha Jayanthi Celebrations. A doubt also crept in to us whether

the famous Diyasena was the "leader" of this movement. However, we all waited impatiently for the Southern gate to open.

A few minutes before midnight beautiful rays began to emanate from the Chuda Manikya. I watched, entranced. Maybe they could be a reflection of the rays of the moon. But inclined towards believing that they are Budu Ras (rays emanating from the Buddha) we emitted cries of "Saadhu," "Saadhu," "Saadhu." Now, of course, I am of the firm belief that they were really so.

Until morning we spent that night in deep meditation. Towards the early hours of the next day, the hermit monks were slowly receding. They seemed disappointed. Having observed Sil the following morning I spent the whole day with Mr. Piyasena and Mr. Kumarasinghe. In the evening we went round visiting all the sacred and historical places and went to sleep on the rocky bed.

The next day we set off to climb Mihintale mountain. As we began climbing the steep incline heading towards Kalu Diya Pokuna (Pond of the Black Waters) we saw an aged female devotee trying to climb the same. We supported her up to the banks of the pond. I got an urge to bathe in these black waters, jumped in and was planning to swim to the rock bed at the other end when I heard the old woman cry out. The others waved to me signalling me to swim back. Fearing that it was a warning of a crocodile I turned back and later came to learn that had I swum further that I would have gotten stuck in the mud. Actually a young man had succumbed to death in the mud sodden area. So I had jumped the third hurdle predicted by Mr. Ponnampereuma.

The experiences I had at Maharagama Government Training College were very useful to me in later life. I got an insight into the attitudes of the off-spring of so-called superior families here. I am tempted to recount one of them without mentioning names.

In a place thronging with so many, the major issue that crops up is food. Those who have gotten used to having their taste buds titillated by well-prepared food at home find it hard to realize that such conditions cannot be expected from mass cooking.

The Crisis Caused by Trying to Sate Somebody's Hunger

The Maharagama Government Training College hostel was at that time located at Mahamegha Gardens. From there it is a stone's throw to Maharagama junction. Just at the entrance is the hostel warden's quarters. This post was then held by our physical training instructor famous also as Lanka's only Olympic medallist, Mr. Duncan White. We were good friends and many an evening I spent chatting with him.

I remember a small story he related. He told me that when he was running the 400 yard hurdle race, in the latter part he felt like carrying the whole island on his head and that his trainer had told him that had his training been better that he could have easily won first place instead of the third. Though ethnically a Burgher he was evidently imbued with a nationalism akin to that of a true born and bred Sinhala Buddhist. But it is sad to see how today the Sinhalaya has confused racism and nationalism and is under the delusion that being racist is being nationalist.

Later Duncan White emigrated to England. About two years back Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe, Mr. Cyril Ekanayake and myself went to meet Mr. Duncan White (who had returned for a visit) at



Photo 116:
With Mr. Duncan White

the Galle Face Hotel. We had a long chat and I gave him many books on the Sarvodaya Movement. When we got to know of his death a few months later we felt sad. I sent Mrs. Angela White a message of condolence and in her letter acknowledging it she had mentioned that in her husband's last moments he had been reading one of those books I gave him.

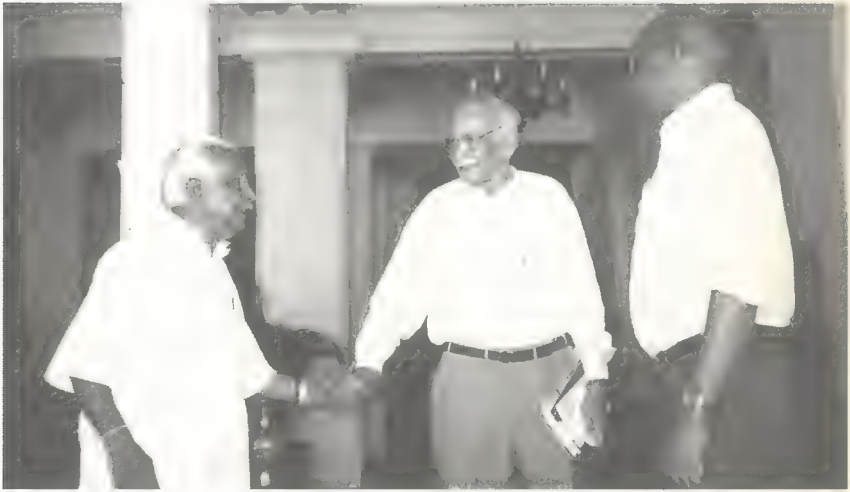


Photo 117: With Mr.Duncan White and Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe at Galle Face Hotel

The Superintendent of the hostel was a Mr. Sebastian Hettiarachchi, another friend. In my autograph book he had penned these lines." Ari, always be what you are". The administration of the kitchen staff was also under his supervision. The food committee, elected by the students, had the duties of purchasing food and maintaining good quality in the meals provided. In return, they always got only criticism. Due to the insistence of Mr. Ralph Alles, later head of D.S. Senanayake Vidyalaya, I too, once became Secretary of this food committee. I began to enjoy purchasing the food from the boutiques and market place of Maharagama. At home the kitchen had been a prohibited area for me and never was I sent to the boutique to purchase this and that.

Much food was wasted and just left over. The kitchen staff used to dump this left over food into troughs and a mudalali sent a handcart twice a day to remove them in turn. Later a rickety lorry replaced the hand cart. The stuff went into the feeding of his

pigs. After the pigs got fatter with all that food, he sold them to be killed while his purse also got fatter.

Once after a meal I strolled towards the kitchen and saw an elderly thin and short man in a white coat and cloth, his completely white hair tied in a knot walking to the kitchen, his head bent. He had the atypical appearance of our average villager disciplined by fear and shame. The bag known then as "*sagatha malla*" (bag of hunger) was in his hands.

I saw a cook picking left overs from the dishes and parceling them and putting into his bag. After he had left I inquired who he was. The cook said that he came to remove the left-over food. "Only the poor will understand the poors' sorrow," he mumbled. I soon got out and followed the man who was now walking along old Maharagama road. He entered a sort of a kiosk. I too went in.

A woman lay on a torn mat. She just could not be his wife.

"Seeya. I saw you carrying away the food parcel from our hostel. I came to find out whether I can help you in some way."

He surveyed me from head to foot, fear welling in him.

"Seeya," I told him again. "Do not be afraid to talk. I am the new President of the Social Service League of the College."

"Aney, sir. I was quite a well to do person. I began working in the MaCallum Road company in my young days and worked there for 40 years. A year ago my wife died. We have only one child and she has been a polio patient from birth. After spending for the funeral rites of my wife, nothing was left. Nobody to look after the child. Yet I went to work but my absences grew in number. Once the boss called me, gave me that month's salary and said that I need not come for work. I told him about my situation to which he replied that they only do business and not social service. The office crowd gave me some money. Now all that is over. Now we live only on these left overs"

My tears flowed down, either through fury welling up in me against that Company or through sympathy with this man. I came back, dumbstruck.

The next day I told the man in charge of the kitchen.

Photo 118:
With
Mr. Duncan
White, his
daughter and
grand-daughter



"I am the secretary of the food committee. When that man comes give him a good packet of meals to take home and not the leftovers. And today let him sit with us for dinner. We both will gain merit by that."

I cannot remember the name of this cook. Since we treated them very well, they too had love and respect for us.

After all the students had taken their meals and left I made the man sit by me where I was having dinner. A student late for dinner came in and sat at the other end. He began to look at us. Then he yelled out in English, asking whether he had to have his meals seated with beggars, and threw back the food and left.

If you cannot eat with beggars, go to Galle Face Hotel, I shouted in turn and told the old man to proceed eating without fear. But the incident having shaken him, he gulped the rest of the food and hastily retreated with the food packet. I too lost my appetite.

Soon after I saw Mr. Duncan White coming towards my room. I saw his silver tooth glisten as he smiled. He took me home and informed me that a student had complained about me and had expressed his plan to bring in a vote of no confidence against me at the student assembly. As I was about to leave, Mr. White told me,

"We will teach the fellow a good lesson."

The fellow was going round collecting signatures for the summoning of a meeting to bring in a vote of no-confidence

against me. Except two or three like him no one had signed it.

Ralph Alles and I enticed students to sign the document going round. Mr. Duncan White presided over the meeting. My friend now brought in his motion. He spoke of the integrity of the College and the high standards that have to be maintained for our honour as well as that of the College. Another seconded it. Before the vote was to be taken I was allowed to talk in my defence. I told the audience about my discoveries and the wastage of the left over food. I also told of the Pig mudalali and said that the choice now lay for the students to choose between helping the Uru (pig) mudalali and people like the one I had helped. The students reacted by shouting, "We do not want pigs." Soon there was a commotion and the fellow who launched the no-confidence motion was soon hoisted on the students' shoulders, taken out and thrown into a pool of mud. Mr. Ralph Alles now declared the meeting closed.

After that, we were walking to Mr. Duncan White's house when we saw the man emerging from a smelly pool of mud.

"Are you okay?" asked Mr. White, patting him and taking all of us for a cup of tea. This incident paved the way for the students of Maharagama Government Training College to become guardians of that family, providing them food and clothing and other necessities.

This particular student later became an excellent teacher and a noble social service worker. He helped my work very much later in life.



Photo 119:
Mr .R.I.T. Alles

To a National Revival via a Community in the Jungle

It was due to my association with Mr. Ariyananda Abeysekera that my attention began to be focussed on pockets of helpless humans inhabiting our woodlands, nourished by the land and acting as custodians of the same jungles, living amongst animals who could be fierce as well as innocent.

The weeks I spent in areas such as Bintenna with Mr. Abeysekera instilled a fervent attachment in me to these humans which can be only attributed in turn to my innate love for



Photo 120: Agony of parents



Photo 121:
Trauma of children

nature. In my own village, all my leisure time had been spent staring at the wide ocean that disappeared into the far horizon. Often as I stared the words of Isaac Newton used to ring in my ears. "I am still a child collecting shells on the beach." From the roofs of the mountains of Unawatuna and Roomassala I have stared for hours at the distant ocean .

As I wandered among the giant trees of Meddekande feasting my eyes on the cascading waterfalls, the

conversation between the Lord Buddha and the monk Ananda came into my mind.

"Ananda, compared to the leaves in my hands how many leaves are there in the forest?"

"The amount is incomparable, Sir"

Likewise I used to think what an abundance of knowledge the world offers us through society and nature to master. And my thirst to master that vast knowledge never seems to get quenched.

I remember the assistant officers of Mr. Abeysekera who were imbued with the same zeal as their master. Among these were Mr. A.C. Abraham, who was in charge of Sittandi Rural Development Training Centre, Mr. B. Wijayapala, a co-student at Mahinda, my wife's brother-in-law Mr. P.B. Weerakoon, and Mr. Ratnadasa De Silva of Mihiripenna, a relative of mine.

I will remember the visit I made to the villages entombed in the jungles of East Lanka. The time period was two weeks starting from April 28, 1957. Mr. Abeysekera and Dr. S. Sothinathan



Photo 122: Veddah families in the jungle

accompanied me. That experience was sufficient to change the aims that dominated my life hitherto and bond me to a pledge to dedicate my life to uplift the lives of the downtrodden.

To embark on this trip I came down from Talawakele where I was spending my New Year holidays with A.T.C. Jinadasa, my baappochchi. From Talawakele I went to Badulla and then joined



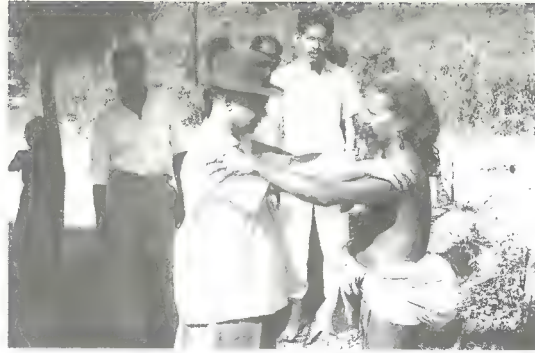
Photo 123: With Tisahamy

the crowd that had come from Colombo in Mr. Abeysekera's jeep. For two weeks we conducted our survey of the Eastern villages. Using Dr. Sothinathan's house as our temporary abode we began to wander all over the villages around Maha Oya. Some of the villages covered were Nillobe, Pallebadda, Kumuduvinna, Damunugama, Idambowa, Nellyadde, Mullegama, Dambana in Beligalla Wasama, Ulhitiyawa, Keragoda, Kandaganvila, Valpallevila, Kudatalawa, Budugahadena, Siyanbalawinna, Kudawela. Padukumbura, Paraganwana, Kadapalla, Ekbahara, Uskivula, Kadubedda, Aluketiyawa, Rambukan Oya and Andekanvila. Stored in my memory are the meandering streams and rivulets of these villages; the tanks and ponds whose waters flowed under the forest canopy.



Photo 124:
Mr.D.A. Abeysekera
(at left), Prof.Wijyaratne
(middle, in shorts) and
others along with
Tisahamy, Veddah Chief

Photo 125:
Prof. Wijeratne and
Tisahamy. In the middle is
Rural Development
Officer, Mr.P.B.Weerakoon



About 60 words belonging to the Veddah vocabulary I had noted in my diary at that time. I began a prolific writing session to the newspapers, especially to the Lankadeepa, on the social, cultural and economic ethos of these villages. The notes I made many years back are now not very legible. But even with difficulty I am able to go through them to gauge what progress had been made during the intervening years.

I can remember an incident that took place during that period. Along with Mr. Abeysekera I went to meet a certain professor of the Peradeniya campus. We made a request to him to do research on the Veddah language and then take some measures for its preservation. He began to question us on the hierarchy of the officers in our departments. Getting to know from us that the Ministers of Home Affairs and Education headed this hierarchy he, told us that this request could be considered only if it came through them. Years later when I went to an American University to deliver a lecture this professor, who was there at the time, made a warm speech praising me for my national services. He had become a great patriot in a foreign country! Later Prof. Wijeratne, father of Dr. Lalith Wijeratne, handled this assignment.

Since by this time a progressive new government had taken over the reins on May 25, 1957, I had made this note:

“It is my fervent desire that the new government would carry out some progressive measures to uplift the conditions of those living in forest areas. These people have now become prey of officers who have received punishment transfers to these areas. Becoming accomplices of brokers aligned to private enterprise,

the officers are like carrions feasting on dead flesh and indulge in nefarious activities such as the sale of ganja sometimes under the very cover of bigwigs.

These innocent folk transport on their bare shoulders large oranges grown in areas as Nelliadde and Pallebade, trekking about 11 miles to Padiyatalawa junction to sell them. The large ones are bought for 3 or 5 cents while the small ones are just thrown into the lorries without any payment.

Acceding to a request made by Mr. Abeysekera, only once did the Marketing Department send a lorry to Padiyatalawa junction. When the innocent folk had sold the oranges to the State at reasonable prices and deposited them in the lorry and were returning, what did these carrions do? They threw chillie powder in the eyes of the villagers and forbade them from ever again selling their products to the State.

There were no police in the area at the time. It would not have mattered since the Police were in the hands of the Assistant Government Agent.

The State officer involved in this incident had been sent here on a punishment transfer and he had not done any justice for the powerful. I earnestly wish that the new government would change this policy."

No sooner had I come to Colombo than I met Mr. Sydney De Soyza, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, famed for his straight-forward ways and apprised him of the above situation. He promised to look into it.

After I assumed duties at Nalanda College, Mr. Soyza came to school in his uniform and told me. "Ari, do not pry into that matter. Forces much bigger than you and I are behind the Ganja narcotics as well as the orange trade. You are a good person. If you



Photo 126: Mrs. Malini Wicremaratne, who is acting as a barber in an under-developed village

write on these issues you will expose yourself to danger. I will try to do my best to help you."

I was pleased with him and yet I could not help musing that all that the 1956 political upheaval had achieved was to replace the earlier bucket full of holes with another bucket full of holes, and we were striving to draw water with it from a well where all springs had dried.



Photo 127:
Mr. A.C. Abraham carrying my
daughter, Charika

However, a strong determination was born in me. That was to dedicate my whole life to explore and discover the six natural springs that had once nourished Sri Lankan society - spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political springs. From the day I made this resolution my whole life has been devoted to unearthing these springs very patiently. Many rose against me as I went on with my venture. Those with no religion, adults out to destroy the cultural mores binding teachers and pupils, parents and children, powerful politicians who pollute everything about them, the capitalists on whose altar reigns only the Money God and their obstructions certainly made my task near impossible.

Back to some scenes I witnessed in those jungle villages:

A woman cried out tormented with labour pains. A child was about to come out to the world with or without a mid-wife's aid. Her man, clad in span cloth responding to the woman's cries, rushed in with the hacking knife with which he was working - to cut off the navel cord. The whole abode was built with barks of trees. I used to stand before these abodes and wonder with tearful eyes whether this is Post-independent Sri Lanka which had enjoyed that status for nine long years now.

A cluster of children sucked barks of trees in another place. The juice sucked thus is their only sustenance and did not fill with flesh the bones sticking out of their haggard bodies. We could give our lunch packets to them for one meal, but what about the

next meal? Models do the cat walk in fashion shows held by scores in cities but there is not even a little bit of clothing to cover the nudity of these children. The streams dry up during the drought, and how is their thirst satiated then?

Hundreds of such scenes I have seen as I travelled in Mr. Abeysekera's jeep from Padiyatalawa to Inginiyagala and then to the Galoya valley. I have also visited villages around Sittandy with Mr. Abraham. Those known as coastal Veddahs live in these villages belonging to the Batticaloa district speaking a hybrid language that includes Sinhala and Tamil words. Many Buddhist temples are now in ruins in this desolated area. I exerted myself not only to repair some of them but to draw the attention of archaeological personnel to their plight via a newspaper I started. It was called Nagenā Hira: (the East), returning to Maharagama fired not with a desire to scale the top rungs of bureaucracy or politics but to sacrifice my whole life to a national revival that would include the poor and the powerless.



Photo 128:
A family gathering at a shramadana camp

My First Foreign Tour - in India

The first foreign country I ever visited was India. A Japanese gentleman, one Mr. Matakatsu Moritomo, was my travel companion. He was introduced to me by my friend Mr. D.A. Abeysekera who on his field trips with the former got me too to join. A specialist who had come over from Japan under the Colombo Plan. Mr. Moritomo did not know English. I did not know Japanese. But we had communicated for some time via a little English and through hand gestures.

I was then preparing for my final exam. It was November 1957. Mr. Moritomo spoke to me over the telephone and said that I had to accompany him to India. As I could not really understand what he meant, I went over to Nippon Hotel where he was staying and told him that my exam was approaching and that time was also required to prepare my passport and visa. I said we could go there in December.

On December 10 in 1957 at 8.40 p.m. we boarded the mail train running from Colombo Fort to Talaimannar. Mr. and Mrs. Abeysekera and their children, Ranjan and Nilanganee, had come to the station to see us off.

We reached Talaimannar station at about 5.45 am the next day, and took a boat to Dhanushkodi at 8.20 am. A port officer by the name of Mr. Sivaratnam helped us. During the two hours on the boat Moritomo enjoyed himself singing away while I, not used to boat trips was out of sorts. I even felt faint and vomited. Ven. Ampitiye Devananda Thero came to my aid at this juncture and kept me company.

At Dhanushkodi we became spectators of hundreds of beggars, both male and female. No foliage was visible. The train ran from there to Rameswaram across a sand desert. The railway train

was like a bridge laid across the ocean along which we viewed the great landmarks of Bharatha Desha. Except for some churches, all other edifices along the route were huts.

At Mandapam camp, the health checks of the passengers between India and Sri Lanka were carried out. From Mandapam we got into another train bound for Madras. On either side was water-sodden land, palmyrah trees and paddy fields. The cities Ramanathapuram and Vallipuram demonstrated land utilisation for development.

Mr. T.D. Sirinivasan, District Medical Officer of Ramnad was a fellow traveller. He wanted to know why Sri Lankans chased away Indians. I could not remember my answer.

Before the 12th dawned we were closing upon Madras. It was Moritomo's habit to get down from the train at every station and do exercises, drawing spectators in the hundreds.

Madras (now Chennai)

The landscape around Madras bore a semblance to that of South Lanka. Yonder one could see mountains, at closer range the valleys. Tanks dotted the terrain. Houses stood close together without gaps. Roofs were flat, with farmland stretching at the rear of the homesteads.

Three of us went first to the Mahabodhi temple situated near the Egmore Station of Madras. The Chief Incumbent was Ven. B. Jinananda Thero. A monk by the name of D. Somarama Thero also lived there. Having kept our bags at the Mahabodhi temple, Moritomo and I went to the city to cash money. We had our lunch at the Victoria Hotel for which we spent only six rupees. We wandered all over. Never have I seen such a seething surging mass of humans. Turn into the alleys from the main road, it is as if one were entering hell. Beggars proliferated. They followed Moritomo like ants dribbling over sugar. He was in the habit of taking photographs and after the photo he used to give his subjects some change. That was the fascination. I was soon relegated into the background and I did not know what to do with myself. Moritomo too now felt he had gotten into a mess with the popular adulation. I hailed a taxi with the little Tamil I knew, waded into the crowd and dragged the man

into it. He looked utterly dishevelled. Chee...Chee.. was all he could say in his distraught mood.

He said this too. "Ceylon people very good. Indian people bad." I tried to tell him to refrain from such comments but verbal communication between us was not easy. We had had enough of Madras by then. That night we bought tickets to go to Bombay. The Monk Devananda joined us as well.

On to Bombay (now Mumbai)

It was a one and half day trip. Except for mountains that came into view now and then the whole scenario was flat and bleak relieved by black rock beds similar to Kataragama with splotches of red soil. Clusters and clusters of huts we passed. Places redolent of a bygone Muslim civilization too we passed. The sun was setting when we reached Bombay.

It was a very happy day Moritomo and I spent at Bombay, the largest city I have ever seen. The new section of Bombay was very well planned and very urban. The highest buildings I had seen were here. The beach was beautiful. Malabar hill, the hanging gardens – we saw them all. A. D. Dassanayake of Ananda Vihara living near Nayar hospital helped us.

On to New Delhi

On the 14th we took the Frontier Mail train to New Delhi that passed through Ajantha and Sanchi. On 16th morning we were in Delhi and we stayed in the station rest rooms.

Catastrophes in Succession

On our New Delhi bound trip a Mr. Kishan Singh of the Indian army helped us. Very fluent in English, he had a great love for our country. He was thirsty for details of the Rama Seetha story and his favourite radio channel was the Sri Lankan channel that disseminated Hindi songs.

With Moritomo we went round to all the small industries centres. Through the Japanese Embassy Moritomo made the acquaintance of Mr. R.J. Hoywani, Permanent Secretary of the Trade and Small Industries Minister in India. This enabled me to utilise a state vehicle to tour the important places in Delhi.

We had to encounter many knotty situations due to Moritomo's language problem. Once he told me he had to meet a certain officer at the secretariat at 9 a.m. I told him the scheduled time was 10 a.m. but he did not agree. So we went one hour ahead and Moritomo decided to indulge in his usual exercises. He removed his coat and began gyrating drawing crowds before the secretariat buildings. I watched, embarrassed. He was breathing hard. The time was about 9.45 am. A set of individuals who looked like chief officers of the place began to line up. An ordinary mass of humans too stood outside. In between Moritomo exercised, unruffled.

That was the day of the Indian Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to the Secretariat. Everybody was eagerly awaiting his arrival. One officer walked up to Moritomo and said something. I saw Moritomo getting angry. I took the coat and was extending it to him saying that the Prime Minister is coming.

Oh! Shri Nehru! he exclaimed and joined the crowds which were lined up while I stayed with the others .

Shri Nehru Ki Jai! May Sri Nehru prosper! The resonant cries rose in the air. Shri Nehru alighted from his vehicle. A perfect silence followed. Some just sprawled on the ground in supplication. Some bent in loyal fervour. Nehru, impervious to all that popular adulation, climbed the steps and went into his office. I was amazed at the way blessings were showered on a leader of men by average citizens. This was the second time I had seen Shri Nehru. The first time was when I listened to a lecture at Colombo University.

On to Kashmir

From that time on some frenzy took hold of Moritomo. In Sri Lanka, he had the state patronage to visit places but in India he was a mere tourist. That spawned in him displeasure towards Indians. When he took a taxi he underpaid and I had to pay the rest. When he wished to visit Kashmir he went to the Kashmir Art Emporium and asked the staff there to get him a permit. When they told him this was just a shop he lambasted them. Finally a female officer there directed us to the proper office where we obtained our permits.

My First Air Trip

On the 17th night we went to Pathankot by train. The night was cold. There we went to the Indian Airlines office and bought air tickets to Sri Nagar. The plane took flight at about 12.30 pm. It was my maiden air flight. In the distance I could see the snow capped Himalayan mountain range. Below swam into view the hydraulic schemes and the fields. There was a buzz in my ears on this initial journey by air but I was soon alright. In forty minutes we were in Sri Nagar airport which was covered by snow. It was my first sight of snow. Frozen with cold I ran towards the buildings.

Moritomo laughed at me.

"You are a weak fellow. In Japan snow falls from 16 to 20 feet."

Snow Trails

There was a tourist office in the airport itself to where we went with our bags. The staff there wanted to know whether we needed a boat house or a hotel. This exasperated Moritomo who could not understand the question. He ran along the road shouting: "Boat house! Boat house!" and carrying only one of his bags. My attempt to explain to him that boat houses meant the tourist residences in the lakes proved futile. Shivering with cold but carrying the bags, I followed his speedy run.

My lips were cracked with cold. Blood poured from my feet. My ears and my nose were blocked with cold. Body warmth was retained somewhat by my apparel that comprised two banians, two shirts and a coat. We both ran along the road by the airport, towards the city. Suddenly he stopped before a house where he rang the bell and went in. I did the same. A white gentleman opened the door and admitted us. I poured out my wrath on Moritomo, the harshest words in English, and unaffected, he only laughed and said,

"You are weak. That is why you feel so cold."

The white gentleman offered us two cups of coffee. He was a Christian Bishop by the name of Lord Hanker. I recounted to him our adventures and crises and pleaded with him to find a place for us to stay.

He started his motor car with difficulty and took us to a hotel named Nedous where I fell asleep the moment I got into bed.

A Deadly Hurdle

The whole day of the 19th we spent in Sri Nagar. Moritomo spent his time buying ornaments while I surveyed the beauty at the base of the Himalaya mountains where riches and poverty jostled each other so near. The sun radiated its rays on the mountains and on the whole terrain but I have never experienced such a biting cold. According to Moritomo's decision we next took a bus to Pathankot. The bus belonged to the Kashmir Transport Service. On a road fringed by leafless trees covered with snow, the bus wended its way. Soon we reached a tunnel about 1 and 3/4km in length, fully covered with snow that made further travel impossible. Due to men's labour the snow was removed and again we resumed the journey. But another obstacle was in the offing.

At a village about one mile before the town of Ramban, the road had slid down about 100 yards. The time was about 5 pm. and no food was available except for two jamanarans (mandarins) given by a group of Punjab University students travelling in the bus. Meanwhile about 500 men were repairing the road. Still large boulders were rolling down the precipice and knocking against the wooden posts floating in the river, sometimes bisecting them with their sheer force.

To satiate our hunger we had to cross this hurdle and go to Ramban. The road was packed with parked vehicles. I now walked towards Ramban following a crowd, having informed Moritomo. After half a mile I came upon a place called the Daag Bungalow where the only item of food available was a dried loaf of bread. I bought that and a few mandarins, began returning to the bus. But by the time I came to the landslide site it was pitch dark. A line of army lorries was halted there now. I requested the driver of the first lorry to have the lights on till I crossed the road, to which he agreed.

Bending towards the slope and placing my right hand on the ground, I started running ahead. Pieces of the boulders kept dropping just above me. Then mid way the man switched off the lights. I just crawled in the pitch dark concentrating my eyes on the lights

of our bus. I also prayed for the blessings of the Triple Gem and the gods.

Then Moritomo came into view, dancing and singing around an open fire with some girls. I first felt angry, then sympathy surged in me for him. The whole night we were in the bus and languished there the following day too. Fruit vendors who visited us filled our bellies. During these days I became friendly with two students of Amar Singh College of Sri Nagar, named Jagmohan Singh and Sushil Kumar.

The road repair having ended at about 4.00 pm. the next day, we began travelling ahead to the city of Jammu, about 105 miles away. We reached Jammu at 12.30 am. and slept in another Daag bungalow, arriving to Pathankot in another bus.

Meanwhile in Kashmir I had not forgotten to inform our train arrival time at Delhi to the monk Devananda Thero who was in this city. On 23rd morning we came from Pathankot to New Delhi. Moritomo wished to go to Calcutta on the same day, so taking the bags left with the monk, we came again to Delhi station by taxi.

There are many platforms in New Delhi station. Moritomo hastily got into the Calcutta bound train that the two of us could not do with equal haste. Having got in, I searched for him high and low but could not find him in this very long train. Meanwhile I lost track of Ven. Devananda Thero too. After about one hour's search I heard Moritomo laughing and there he was perched high up on a sleeping berth and entertaining others below.

Seeing me, his only remark was "Oh! You are weak."

We spent one and half hours in the Delhi-Calcutta train. On the 24th we reached Calcutta. Having gotten off, we were approaching the exit gate when I saw my bag and a bundle of yellow robes. I left Moritomo there, hunted for the owner of the bundle and finally found him. The poor monk had been having a bout of indigestion in the train. Escorting him we rented out a room in the railway station and lodged.

Now Moritomo wished to get to Madras on the same day and I had to acquiesce. After a bath and lunch at Calcutta station we entrained to Madras that day itself.

A Strange Encounter

Across the bridge spanning the Bhadravari Ganga (river) through Andhra Pradesh we came non-stop to Madras having heard of devastating floods in our country. We were then told that the train would not go beyond Mandapam, so we had to stop there. Moritomo got the idea of going back to Trichy and flying to Colombo from there, making use of the Trichy-Colombo air service. He suggested that the two of us go ahead and if there was a seat for Ven. Devananda Thero to get him to join us later. I agreed to the plan which we accordingly executed.

We returned to Trichy on the 28th. There was a fellow female passenger called Christiana who was the only other person Colombo-bound on the train to Madras. She was wedded to a contractor from Trincomalee and was the head of a girls' school in Egmore. She was due to appear in a divorce suit filed against her husband. But since she could not go to Sri Lanka on the stipulated day she decided to go back to Madras. She also came to Trichy with us from Mandapam. We rented two rooms no. 5 and no. 10. I slept in room no. 5 and Moritomo and the woman slept in room no. 10. On the 20th, only one seat was available and Moritomo had already decided he should utilise it. I thought he would give me money to fly back the next day. But he gave me only ten rupees and just vanished into an airport bound taxi. I sent a telegram to the Ven. Devananda Thero to come to Trichy. I had enough money for a day's subsistence but not for an air ticket. So I had lunch, wandered about the town, came back to my room and slept. The time was about 2.30 pm.

Somebody tapped on the door. When I opened the door there stood the warden of the railway retiring rooms, Mrs. George, and a police officer. They told me that the Indian government does not allow unethical acts and that there are strict rules for tourists.

Flummoxed, I asked what they meant.

They pointed at the other bed. Christiana was fast asleep there. What had happened was that while I was in dreamland, the woman had slowly opened the door and come and got onto that bed.

"Last night," they admonished me, "a Chinese slept with this woman and today you are sleeping with her. This is highly irregular."

I took them out and explained everything. Since I had paid money for the other room too, I went to that and slept. Later much to my relief, Christiana had scrawled a note that she was leaving by the Madras train. Meanwhile I checked every train that came from Mandapam for Ven. Devananda Thero but was disappointed. I then wandered in the town and came back but there were no signs of the monk.

I had no money to pay another day's room rent. At 3.00 pm. I had to leave the room. With the little money I had I could only have a cup of coffee. I reclined on the bed and scribbled on a newspaper all what had happened to me. That was for the information of the Sri Lanka High Commissioner's Office should anything happen to me.

Somebody knocked on the door. It was again Mrs. George, who wished to know whether I would not mind a room mate since I was leaving in another hour.

"No. I don't mind," I said.

Following, a labourer carrying a huge suitcase a gentleman came in.

"Hello!"

"Hello!"

I sank into a dismal reverie. Soon I would be a vagrant on the highway, companion to India's teeming beggar population. Should I make a clean breast of it all to Mrs. George and ask for

help? Fury welled in me against Moritomo.

I started smoking and watching the way the smoke curled upwards. Soon I noticed that as the smoke drifted up a darker shaded curl of smoke was joining it. I traced its source. It was emanating from the cigar of the stranger. Now the name on his suitcase swam into my orbit of observation. I almost ran to him, for the name and address on it was "A. Ariyaratnam. Colombo"

Walking up to him, I held his hand and spoke to him.

"Sir, from where are you?"

"From Colombo."

"What are you doing here?"

"Came on a business matter to meet film producer Gunaratnam. I met him at Madurai. Going back tomorrow."

"What are you doing here?"

"I am just lost here. In a few minutes I will have to leave this room."

I related to him the full repertoire of my travels with a fool. He got up, handed me 30 rupees, told me to pay the room rent of two days and buy something to eat.

After I had paid the room rent and come back I found my benefactor all dressed up.

"My money is gone. I will go back to Madras and borrow some cash from Gunaratnam and then we can both fly to Colombo. Look after my bags till I come back and be happy."

I felt rejuvenated. My youth had gotten a new lease. I filled my tummy. The only obstacle of filling the happy cup was that the Reverend had still not come with my bags. Every train arriving from Mandapam I surveyed.

Wonder of wonders! I suddenly saw the monk on the railway pavement swathed in his yellow robes. He was there with his bags and my bags. My cup of happiness was now full. So was the venerable's. Hiring a labourer to carry our bags we went to the rest rooms where I was staying.

"Why did you get late, Sir?" I asked him, "I sent the telegram on the 1st."

That led to both gushing out with the experiences gone through.

The monk's story ran as follows:

"After you left to Trichy I wandered about in Mandapam camp. There I met a doctor named Perera. He invited me to his home instead of lodging at the resthouse. So I went there. But every train coming from Trichy I checked for you, then I thought maybe you sent a telegram. So I went and pasted a bit of paper on the resthouse door that I was now staying at Dr. Perera's house. The telegram man on his second visit had seen this and then traced me. I immediately took the train."

The venerable had enough money with him for both of us to purchase air tickets. So we went to the airlines office. There was one seat. I requested the monk to proceed to Sri Lanka and said that I would come the next day with Mr. Ariyaratnam. I also told him to visit me at the Nalanda College.

The whole of the 21st the two of us spent very happily sight-seeing in the city. Moritomo's ludicrous conduct was our main theme of conversation. We talked late into the night and then fell asleep. Towards dawn Mr. Ariyaratnam returned. He was happy at all that had happened. But there was something sad in his demeanour that I could not fathom. He too fell asleep.

Having escorted the venerable to the airport I came back to the room. Mr. Ariyaratnam had breakfast with me and then walked to the airlines office immersed in thought. We were able to reserve two seats in a special airplane loaded with vegetables, foodstuff and medicine.

Now Mr. Ariyaratnam was fully acquainted with the details of my life – my addiction to social service, my hopes and dreams for the future of my country, my new position as a teacher at Nalanda College and so on. It was when we were walking on the huge bridge over Trichinopoly railway station, the day of our departure from India, that my friend suddenly stopped and asked me a question looking at me direct.

"Ariyaratne, I helped you at a time of distress. Will you reciprocate the same way?"

"Sure. I am duty bound for it. You have only to ask."

"I am unmarried. My mother still lives and now my only responsibility is looking after her. But I won't be able to go on

doing it."

He took out a handkerchief and wiped his tears.

"Why?"

"My days are numbered."

"Your age?"

"Sixty."

"My father is 75 and he is still active. Why are you so worried?"

"It is not the age. I am suffering from an incurable disease."

"Tell me what it is. Maybe I can help. Please tell the truth."

Lawyer Ariyaratnam, who had all this time been looking away, came close and kept a hand on my shoulder. Then he said that he kept his disease a secret since his debtors would hold back their payments and after his death his mother could not get the money.

"No," I said. "Your disease is only in your mind. I may be able to cure you. I am destined to cure others' illnesses. Regard me as your son and tell me everything."

"Are you being truthful?"

"Yes."

"Then see this."

He opened his mouth and disclosed his jaw where something like a ball of cotton wool was dangling inside.

Did you show it to a doctor? I asked.

"No," he said. "It is a cancer."

I told him that such a conclusion should be arrived at only by a doctor and added that an aunt of mine, my punchi nanda, had something like it. After showing it to a doctor it was cured. It is not a cancer, I reiterated. He looked surprised.

"Tonight after we get back I will visit you in a day or two. I will take you to a cancer specialist. Just say you are Ariyaratne, minus the m. After that only the three of us know the secret."

He agreed.

"But you must come to my house after we arrive in Sri Lanka. I live close to Nalanda in a big house. You can stay with me."

I agreed and I saw his face brightening.

But some other line of thinking churned within me. What if he really had a cancer? Suppressing that fearful thought I made all the preparations for the flight, turned in the keys and went to the airport with Mr. Ariyaratnam.

The plane took off at 7 in the night. It was a special plane with a mission of transporting all the foodstuff and medicines collected in response to Shri Nehru's clarion call to come to the aid of Lankan flood victims. The two of us were the only passengers.

We arrived at Ratmalana at 8.30 pm. This was my second air trip. Mr. Ariyaratnam took me in a taxi to Maradana where we got off before New City Stores. From there we walked along a small crossroad running behind the shop. A two storeyed house stood there and before it, a massive bread-fruit tree spread its branches.

That was my maiden visit to the house No. 493, Maradana Road, Colombo 10, "The House Under the Breadfruit Tree." The day was December 31, 1957. Mr. Ariyaratnam prepared a bed for me and also made me a cup of milk coffee with his own hands. This house was for 14 years destined to be my Jayabhoomi, my "Venue of Victory." My first night there I slept soundly.



Photo 129: The House Under the Breadfruit Tree

Beginning Life in the House Under the Breadfruit Tree

The first day of the year 1958 dawned. I realized that I had entered a new stage in my life where my training period at Maharagama ended and I began my life as a teacher of Nalanda College. On the 7th January I had to take my appointment. It could be the fruition of all my dreams in the social service arena.

"Good morning!" Mr. Ariyaratnam greeted me while preparing my breakfast. "What is your program today?"

"First I must go to Battaramulla and meet Mr. Abeysekera. Then I must visit my punchi amma. Then I must visit the cancer specialist Dr. Fernando to make an appointment to take my father to him. Then I will go to Unawatuna to visit my parents. Then I have to make preparations for assuming duties at Nalanda College. Maybe I have to inquire there about my accommodation facilities too. But I will give priority to your problem first."

He let out a sigh of relief and we had breakfast. I came to his place that night after having got the appointment on the following day.

When I took him there I entered the general hospital clinic of Dr. Fernando alone without the patient. I told him that my father was very scared that he had cancer and that if that was so, not to tell him.

After examining him the doctor laughed and said,

"Your son told me that even if you have a cancer not to tell you so. This growth is due to a deformation in a tooth which has cut into the flesh. That has made the area white. Get the tooth removed and the white section will disappear."

Straight away we went to the Punchi Borella surgery of dental surgeon Dr. G. W. Wimaladharma who removed the tooth. I left my bags at Mr. Ariyaratnam's and went off to Galle for a few days.

I had promised my loku akka to get her a Buddha statue from India but my adventures there with Moritomo gave me no opportunity to buy one. So I went to Semage shop at Pettah, bought a statue and gifted it to akka without much ado. Even today she shows it to everyone exulting "See the statue malli bought me from India on his first trip there." Though later I told her the truth she goes on saying this, mistrusting my later story.

After visiting Punchi akka in Ginthota, I came back to Colombo on January 6th 1958. I visited the Maharagama Government Training College and came to Delgahayata Gedera. The next day I had to assume duties at Nalanda College. Mr. Ariyaratnam requested me to continue living with him. Meanwhile, Mr. P.E. Perera who owned the house and New City Stores along with his son, became friendly with me. In the upper floor lived Mr. Perera's son-in-law, Mr. V.T. Nanayakkara, once the Principal of Vijaya College of Matale and also an ex-MP. He too became my friend and all of them wished me to stay there. They wanted me to help the younger son of Mr. Perera with his studies. He was a student of St. Thomas College, Mount Lavinia.

I finally agreed but on condition that Mr. Ariyaratnam accept rent from me. It did not come to more than thirty rupees. After he got well I said that I would look for a new place.

Fate works in strange ways. Three months passed. Mr. Ariyaratnam was now quite hale and hearty. No white inside his mouth anywhere. His body had put on flesh and the face was just radiant.

One evening I asked him permission to go to another place saying he was quite well now, and that I have fulfilled my part of



Photo 130:
Dr. G. W. Wimaladharma

Photo 131:
Ven. Hissalle
Gnanawimala
Thero, Mr. P.W.
Mahawatte,
Mr. Dharmasena
Senanayake,
Mr. T.S. Silva,
Mr. K.Dassanayake
at the House Under
the Breadfruit Tree



the pact. That made him stand up draping the vetti between his legs. He also lit a large cigar. Then he spoke,

“Ariyaratne! Now I know you in and out. You are a great and inimitable youth. You have the spiritual power to render an immense service to this nation. I pray for the help of the gods I have faith in to assist you in your endeavours. You own this place. Not me. Make this your centre of activities. I will request my landlord to transfer the lease of this house to you. I have a house at Silversmith Street, I will go there. You stay here permanently.”

I just could not believe my ears. How genuinely he spoke! In fact, I too had grown fond of the house. And for 14 years it was destined to be the nexus of my social service activities, the central office of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement.

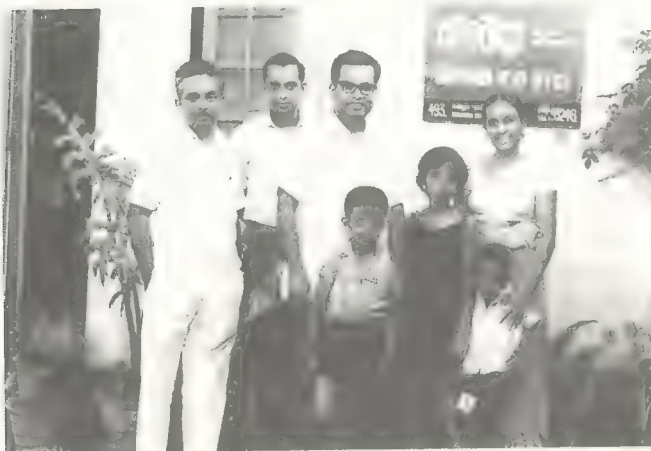


Photo 132:
In front of the
Sarvodaya Office
at House Under the
Breadfruit Tree,
myself, Nalanda
College Social
Service League
Secretary Sunil
Wickramatunga,
World Assembly
of Youth Secretary-
General Jyothi
Shanker, Neetha,
Vinya, Charika and
Jeevan

Personality Awakening via Subject Instruction

After I assumed duties at Nalanda College on January 7, 1958 the Principal Mr. Karunananda put me in charge of 10th grade A. The subjects allotted to me were maths and biology in the grades 9 and 10. Disenchanted with the contemporary education system the first day as I scrutinized the students' faces, I felt that instead of biology what they should be taught was the science of life. I did not regard the subject as an end in itself but as a tool in the personality development of the child, and that aspect began to predominate the subject matter in my teachings.

The standard dress of the teachers at that time was white trousers, long sleeved shirt, white coat and tie. Soon I dropped the coat after remembering the naked kids in the forest. No objection arose from the school head. Then off came the tie, which I began to wear only for functions.

In the evening I used to play cricket with the children. I was in the Teachers' Cricket Team team led by Mr. A.G.G. Perera, vice principal of St. John Bosco of Hanwella and I needed practice. Soon objections arose from some teachers about my associating too closely with the students, and they made me stop playing with them. I decided to avoid the open clashes from my childhood until the time that the ethics that I upheld were victorious.

I remember an incident. We were playing a cricket match at Radella grounds. After having lost two wickets I had to bat. Before commencing the play, a pal gave me half a bottle of beer - Lion Lager to drink. On his assurance that it was not liquor I gulped it down. The effect evidently enlarged the size of the ball

Nalanda College



Photo 133: Nalanda College

in my eyes. I had bowled well and remained 70 not out. But that was the first and last time I had my share of an alcoholic drink including Lion Lager.

Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe, who had decided to join Dharmaraja College, changed his mind later and joined Nalanda. He too became a middle-school science teacher. Mr. Kamal Dissanayake joined as the chemistry teacher. Mr. Dharmasena Senanayake taught in the University Entrance classes. Other new teachers who joined were Mr. M. A. Tillakaratne, Mr. Sugathamuni Gnanasiri, Mr. Victor De Silva, Mr. Amerasinghe and Miss Sriya Fonseka, an old Mahindian, Mr. T.S. Silva and Miss Soma De Silva.

I had no problem in teaching. Compared to many other teachers, the results of my students stood out at public examinations.

The First Camp at Kanatoluwa

The weekends and the holidays of the period from mid 1956 to end of 1957, I devoted to surveying the villages in the areas identified by the state as undeveloped areas the provinces of Wayamba, North, East and Uva. The development of backward communities in these areas was in the hands of Mr. Ariyananda Abeysekera of the Department of Rural Development and Small



Photo 134: Ven. Heenatiyana
Dhammaloka Nayake Thero

Industries. I have already mentioned some of my tours with him. He had a small Bug Fiat car that could do rounds in the jungle areas that luxurious vehicles of today cannot do. When the way ahead was too impossible to drive through, we carried the vehicle and if it broke down, Mr. Abeysekera personally attended to it using rudimentary devices. To visit the folk living amidst wild beasts not only was an act of social service but it provided me with entertainment and education as well. Many week ends we visited communities discriminated against due to their caste. They were mostly in the Ratnapura, Kegalle and Kurunegala districts. For our first camp, we selected the village of Kanatoluwa. Mr. W.A. Seneviratne who at this time performed Mr Abeysekera's duties in the Kurunegala district, was a very good officer.

There was a very long standing Social Services League at Nalanda. It had been established by Ven. Ananda Maitreya Thero and Heenatiyana Dhammaloka Thero to provide assistance to those

afflicted when the malaria epidemic spread throughout the country. These two prelates worked as Dhamma teachers in the College then. When I joined Nalanda the work of this society was limited to providing stationary to poor students and organising other social service work. Since the school Principal and President of the Social Services League, Mr. Dharmasiri Senanayake was already sensitized to my work in this area, I

too was appointed as an additional Vice-President in a meeting held in mid-1958.

In my first lecture at this society I emphasized the need for living with the community. This could transcend entities such as education, class room, school, books, exams and could become an all-embracing educational process. Without any adverse effect on formal education but strengthening it, the school could enter society. We could select a very under-developed village, establish a camp there, work for the community using it as a nucleus and even learn from the villagers. This educational camp could be a historical

beginning of a great movement that could achieve national dimensions and may even draw the attention of the United Nations, I gushed.

My proposal was commended by Mr. M.A. Tillekeratne and Mr. H.M. Janaratne and some students. The Principal, who was in the audience, said in his speech that, leaving aside my dreams of launching a national movement to draw the attention of the UN, we should get together to run a useful camp to which he would give his

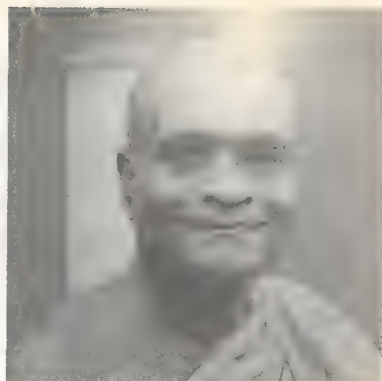


Photo 135:

Ven. Thunnane Sumanathissa Thero



Photo 136: Mr. Karunananda at
Kanatholuwa

Kanatholuwa Shramadana Camp

Photo 137:
Digging a well

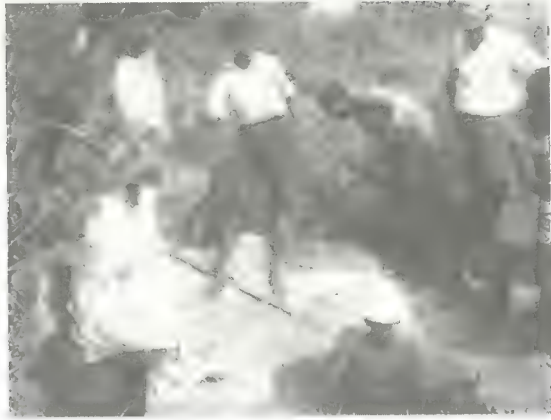


Photo 138:
Nalanda students at work

Photo 139:
Carrying in procession a
Buddha's statue to the sacred Bodhi.
Mr. K. N. Jayalath who is now an
account (on left) is carrying the
'viyana' - cloth held over
as an honour



full co-operation. We set about organizing a Camp Planning Committee. The day the committee was appointed I reckon as the day the seed of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement was sown. But that day the name of the organization that began the movement was the Social Service League of Nalanda College. On a decision taken that day the name evolved within a year to the Shramadana Movement, and by the year 1962 to Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement.



Photo 140:
Ven. Kotmale Amarawansa Thero

From the day we took the decision to run the camp, almost every week end we went in Mr. Karunananda's vehicle to Kanatholuwa. Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe drove it. Sometimes we used to drive in the Peugeot of Mr. D. S. Senanayake or in the DKW of Mr. L.P. Wijesundera or Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe's Volkswagen or Mr. Percy Wijesuriya's Ford Consul.

Beginning from May 1958 one or two days every week for 4 months we held training sessions for the children attending the camp. Departmental heads and institutional heads were invited to deliver lectures. Films on community development and social welfare brought from embassies were shown in these camps. To prepare for the massive educational and social camp that was to be held that December for teachers and pupils, we went on several visits to Kanatoluwa.



Photo 141:
Giving a haircut

Different committees comprising teachers and pupils were formed to undertake the varied activities in Kantoluwa. These included the construction of a school, making the school furniture, stocking the equipment necessary

for school going children such as dresses, books, and stationery; construction of roads, houses, and wells; and launching a cane industry in the village. The first camp was conducted in December. Prof. Nandasena Ratnapala has written a book on this camp.

When I joined Nalanda College, the Dhamma Teacher on the staff was Ven. Kotmale Amarawansa Thero. I became very friendly with him. I considered him to be an advisor in my social service activities. He had written about the Kanatholuwa Project in his memoirs entitled *Amaravadana*.

“I joined Nalanda College as a Dhamma Teacher at the repeated requests made by the then principal Mr Lawris. I voluntarily served there for 3 years and subsequently served as a permanent teacher. With the help of 4 other volunteer monks, I taught Buddhism in every class, took the students to Jayasekararama Temple for religious observances and conducted meditation on Poya Days. I got the students to collect food, clothes and various other materials and gifted them to the Victoria Home for the Incurables. I established class libraries, got the students to produce a journal entitled “Nalanda Pahana”



Photo 142:
First opportunity to offer alms
to a monk



Photo 143:
Cutting a road. Mr. K. N. Jayalath who
is now an accountant is seen in front

(Lamp of Nalanda) and promoted the activities of the Social Service League.

Mr Lawris was an intelligent and a farseeing principal. He and many members of the staff who are too many to mention by name appreciated and supported my work. But I have to mention one teacher named Mr A. T. Ariyaratne who gave leadership and guidance to a whole range of social service activities which brought Nalanda College great honour. He was broadminded, compassionate and honest.

This does not mean he had no problems. Jealousy and discrimination were rampant. But we surmounted all these obstacles without getting discouraged. In his small house on the Maradana Road close to Ananda College he collected teachers, senior students and well wishers and got my cooperation also to establish the Sarvodaya Association. Honesty, courage and hard work paid dividends. He resigned from Nalanda College and Government Service and sacrificed everything he had to promote the Sarvodaya Movement. Today we can see how he is honoured not only by people of this country, but the world over. Out of the work done by Sarvodaya what I know best is the work done at Kanatholuwa Village in the Kurunegala District. I was there in this depressed and socially ostracized village for one whole month. The Shramadana Camp was like a university on one hand and on the other hand like a carnival where hundreds of people came and watched how these young students were fighting caste and class inequalities and social discrimination.

We constructed roads, wells, playgrounds, places of religious worship and so on. For the first time people in this village



Photo 144:

Ven. Thunnane Sumanathissa
Thero enters a village home for alms

were able to listen to Dhamma Talks, participate in religious activities, offer alms to the Buddhist Monks and even observe the eight precepts. I was the first monk to go begging for alms from house to house in this village where people were considered to be "untouchables". A lot of publicity was given to this project by the newspapers and the Government Film Unit. There was a feature film also based on this project titled "Chandali". Without my knowledge I was also featured in this film which made people criticize me for acting in films. I have not even seen this film and I cannot but laugh when I hear all these episodes."

The Kanatoluwa camp was actually a revolution. It could best be described as the the first organized activity launched with a strong determination to fight the divisive factors in society of class and creed and caste, and also to involve school children in an egalitarian movement. Not only the Nalanda College students but the Scouts of Kuliyaipitiya Central, a set of trainees at Maharagama GTC and many officers of the Rural Development Department participated in the camp.

Among the hundreds of celebrities who visited the camp invited with letters of invitation personally signed by Mr. Abeysekera and me were: Most Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Mahanayake Thero, Dr. P. De S. Kularatne, Inspector-General of Police Osmund De Silva, DIG Lambruggen, Dr. Herath Guneratne who was Health Director of Kurunegala at this time and who later became Director of the Asia-Pacific Zone in the WHO, MP Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, Mr. Vincent Subasinghe Ralahamy who pioneered the Sandalanka Co-operative Movement, G.V.P. Samarasinghe, Director of Rural Development and Prof. Siri Gunasinghe.

We had invited the Prime Minister, Hon. Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, as the Chief Guest at the prize giving on the last day. A few days earlier, he phoned me and conveyed sorrow over his inability to come. He said Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike would come instead carrying a message from him and offered his good wishes and requested me to carry on the good work. He also wished to meet me after the camp.

As he promised on December 16, 1958 Mrs. Bandaranaike arrived and participated in the camp carrying the Prime Minister's message. Mrs. N. S. Perera, President of the Mahila Society and a few others came along with her. The Prime Minister's letter of greeting dated 15.12.58 read:

Office of the Prime Minister of Ceylon

I was very happy when I heard of the Scheme formulated by the Nalanda Vidyalaya Social Service League for the Development of a Community of depressed people.

In an enlightened age such as this when the entire world is aglow with broader visions and becoming aware of the need for every human being to enjoy Fundamental Human Rights and Liberties, it is a grave injustice for any Country or Society to permit the existence of a Community whose Economic, Educational and Social aspirations are neglected.

The progressive step taken by the Nalanda Vidyalaya Social Service League in selecting for Development village inhabited by a Community which is cast out by others and condemned to languish in misery, is acclaimed as a National Service of the Highest Order.

Furthermore, the noble example set by the Nalanda Vidyalaya Social Service League will undoubtedly be followed by other Educational Institutions and Social Service Organisations.

I hope that this First endeavour of its kind designed to emancipate these less fortunate brethren will meet with unqualified success and also serve as a foundation of a Nationwide Movement of Social Regeneration.

(Sgd:) S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike
15.12.58

Mrs. Bandaranaike also wrote a letter, following her visit:



Photo 145:
Hon. Mr. S.W.R.D.
Bandaranaike

I visited this village along with Mrs. N.S. Perera to participate in the Final Day Celebrations (Prize Distribution and Public Meeting) of the Work Camp organised by the Social Service League of Nalanda Vidyalaya and the Rural Development Department. It has given us great Pleasure to see the wonderful work done by all those who have been responsible in the development of the village. The wonderful spirit of service and the enthusiasm displayed by the students of Nalanda Vidyalaya is very praiseworthy. We hope all other schools will follow their example and come forward to help in the Development of our Backward villages. I wish this scheme all success.



Photo 146:
Mrs. Sirimavo
R.D. Bandaranaike

(Sgd:) Sirima Bandaranaike
Kanatoluwa - 16.12.58

The villagers of Kanatoluwa showed immense interest in the camp. Some powerful but uneducated elders in outlying areas reacted by removing our publicity posters. But in the face of the increasing number of visitors to the camp and their praise, the opposition ebbed.



Photo 147:
Mrs. Bandaranaike observes
digging of a well

Nalanda students went frequently to Kanatoluwa and participated in the educational and other activities of the Kanatholuwa children. The latter too were invited to Nalanda College and presented with books and clothing. Through a series of exhibitions, and other social service activities of Nalanda College were displayed to the public.



Photo 148: Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike distributes prizes. (l to r) myself, Mr. Abeysekera (seated on the ground), and Mr. Karunananda



Photo 149:
Constructing a road to Kanatoluwa



Photo 150:
A sewing class

In a variety show held at the YMBA, Borella I remember Mr. Sisira Senaratne, an old boy of Nalanda College getting on the stage to entertain the audience with a song he had just composed.



Photo 151: Mr. Sisira Senaratne and
Mrs. Indrani Senaratne

This was the song:

A deserted village, so small
Darkness engulfed it
In that village Kanatoluwa
Sorrow prevailed
No house to live in
No water to drink
No food to eat
Like animals they lived
To their rescue
Arose Nalanda

The Government Film Unit made a documentary of the camp titled "The Sun Rises" and it was dubbed in both Sinhala and English. One Mr. A. Seneviratne, an Assistant Director, was in charge of it. Mr. U.B. Elkaduwa was the cameraman and Mr. Daya de Silva and Mr. K. Sathyanandan assisted.

Newspapers of all languages and the radio gave wide coverage to the camp. Though I shunned the media, my name as the pioneer of this movement became famous. Even Mr. Abeysekera got into the limelight. Despite the appreciation of many honest



Photo 152:
The Prime Minister's
wife Mrs. Sirimavo
Bandaranaike
at Kanatoluwa

people both Mr. Abeysekera and I at this time became the recipient of acute jealousy of some members of the Rural Development Department and of some Nalanda College staff.

Nalanda was an institution built on Buddhist culture. At this time it boasted a Cricket Team, a Cadet Corps not second to any other pri-

ivate or public school. It excelled in many sports. It was blazing trails in the social service arena, too, equalling its fame in other activities. This led to some internal dissension. But the patient and disciplined teachers who indulged in social service took care not to let is dissension grow out of proportion. So in the long run we had a very positive impact.

Today as then I never replied to my antagonists nor did I retaliate. Instead, all that I did was to formulate a clear philosophy, establish new techniques of service and through these, consolidate the organizational network. I did much writing on these and some of these writings were published. I also wrote to the

newspapers. I consider it an utter waste of time to reply to my adversaries, especially those critics who write with venom and envy.

Those who listen to or read these criticisms should first let their minds dwell on the work done by the one subjected to the criticism.



Photo 153:
Mrs. Bandaranaike distributing prizes



Photo 154:
Distributing Buddha pictures to Sil observers at
Kanatoluwa

How far have these criticisms been based on truth, clear understanding and concern for social development? Or have these been based on negative factors such as envy, revenge, venom and ignorance? The intelligent reader should take into account all these factors.

Photo 155:

Some Pioneer Old Nalandians who Participated in the Shramadana Camps



Dr. G. G. Thurusinghe



Maj. Gen. Ananda
Weerasekera USP, M.A.



Mr. Sunil
Wickramatunge



Photo 156:

Rattan crafts instruction given by
Mr. A. D. M. Gunasekera



Photo 157:

At the Panichchankerny camp -
with me Mr. D. S. Senanayake and
Dharma Gunasinghe

A Path to Nuptial Knots

The day I met Neetha is as fresh in my mind as if it was today. It was almost an encounter prescribed by destiny. I loved a certain woman in my school days but somewhere in my mind lurked the feeling that joining her family would curtail my future plans to serve my people. So in 1955 I stopped that relationship. During the next two years I fancied a bachelor life as that spent by my baappa and my cousin, Siri Jinadasa.

But the success of my social service activities at Nalanda College had engendered much jealousy. I continued staging similar camps after 1958 that riveted much publicity and broke new ground in education, but the success story bred me many enemies too. Our custom of taking along young students to work in camps and getting both genders to work together led to proliferation of false charges against us. By 1959 I was in quest for a partner who would be a fitting mate to shoulder the social revolution I envisioned.



Photo 158:

Former North-East Governor and film idol Mr. Gamini Fonseka with his German counterpart Fred Roman, during a shramadana camp interval

Manawa Camp

It was Mr. Abeysekera and I who signed on as joint organizers of all the camps held after Kanatoluwa camp. One eventful day we were both in Manawa camp along with about 100 students of Nalanda College. I slept that previous night on a mat spread out on the floor of the textile weaving centre.



Photo 159: Mrs. Sita Rajasuriya, with the girl guides of Musaeus College at Manawa camp. Indra Dasanayake, Neetha, Nalini Rajapakse, and Pushparanee

Dream

Towards the morning hours I had a dream. An elderly woman came to the camp with two girls. I held one by my hand and flew away like a bird. That was the dream. I took part in 'The Family Gathering' in the morning but told Mr. Abeysekera that I was taking the day off and requested him to be in charge. He and the present executive director of Sarvodaya, Mr. Dharmasena Senanayake asked me why I was not coming to the camp. I replied that it was the day allotted for me to select a life partner. Since I used to make jokes often they said, "Good," wished me luck and went away to supervise the students engaged in various activities in the camp such as tree felling, fencing, tree planting, digging of wells.

I began working on some documents in the Camp office but my eyes got distracted by every vehicle that entered. I was feeling really restless.

Three Strangers

The time was now about 8.30 am. A vehicle stopped and a lady dressed in an Osari (Kandyan saree) walked towards the office with two girls. Mr. Katugampola was seated by me. I pointed at the younger girl and told him, "That is the girl I will marry."

Photo 160:
Mr. D.C. Katugampola
distributing clothes at
Manawa camp



Photo 161:
The Nalanda College
shramadana workers

Photo 162:
Neetha with Nalanda College
shramadana workers



Just then the elderly lady said something to the girls who ran back to the car. Then, she, Mrs. Tennekoon walked ahead. "Mr. Ariyaratne," she addressed me, "I have brought two girls to help you. Two sisters. The younger one has a collection of your articles. She wishes to work with you. But I told her that Ariyaratne is an old man. So I will not introduce you straight off."

Mrs. Tennekoon looked at the car and now along with the driver they were coming, carrying some *thambili* (king coconut) and other food stuff.

"Because I saw you here I sent them back," she added.

"Good. I will tell them that Ariyaratne is fast asleep still. Poor old fellow. He needs rest, I will say"

A meeting through destiny!

Neetha and her elder sister Chitra were now standing by us. I gazed at Neetha. I was now positive that this was the girl I saw in my dreams who would end up my life partner. A meeting prescribed by destiny had taken place. Mrs. Tennekoon introduced me to the young teacher of Nalanda who handed me the gifts.



Photo 164: Colonel Weerasena Rajapakse having lunch with Indian Airlines representative Mr. Athle during Manawa camp



Photo 163: The girl guides working at Manawa. In the forefront with back to camera is Neetha

"Let us go to the camp," I suggested, "We can meet Mr. Ariyaratne there."

A Mini Test

Chitra and Mrs. Tennekone walked in front and I followed with Neetha by me. We were going through the camp and I was making use of the longest cross roads to

cover the camp to have a peek into Neetha's mind.

"What is nangi's name?"

"Neetha Dhammachari."

"Dhammachari. Dhammi. It is a beautiful name. Where do you study?"

"At Musaeus College in Colombo."

"Where do you stay?"

"At the house of a friend of my father. He is one Mr. Semage from whose shop father buys all his requirements."

"I know Mr. Semage. He helps us in our Shramadana work a lot."

"In what class is Dhammi studying?"

"Grade 10, I am taking the exam this time."

"After that?"

"I plan to do social service."

She laughed stubbornly.

"You have to get training in social service to do it."

"I am a guide and a ranger."

"That is not enough."

"The rest I will learn from Mr. Ariyaratne. I want to join the Shramadhana Movement. Will he take me?"

I felt that it was not correct to go on deceiving this faithful disciple of mine and that I should reveal my real self to her.

"Nangi. Before you join Mr. Ariyaratne you have to get permission from your parents, unlike the others."

Now we had reached the weva (tank). I went on testing her for about an hour. She passed the test with 100 percent marks.

Secret Out

Mr. Abeysekera came out from somewhere and began talking to Mrs. Tennekone. Neetha and Chitra joined the Shramadana groups. Soon they came to know that Mr. Ariyaratne and I were the same.

I joined another group and had Mr. Katugampola's vehicle ready.

"Who are those two girls who came with Mrs. Tennekoon?"

I had to get rid of the question before it oppressed me further.

A Marriage Proposal

After the group drove away, I followed them in Mr. Katugampola's car. The car entered the Tennekoon Walawwa (Tennekoon's mansion) and I saw the two girls jumping over the fence and walking to the next house. We drove straight into the walawwa. After I asked Mr. Katugampola to wait in the car, I jumped over the fence and went to the next house. An elderly person with a sombre face clad in white shirt and white sarong came out onto the verandah. With incredible self-confidence rushing into me, I spoke to him.

"Mahathmaya, are you Neetha's father?"

"Yes."

"I am here for just a minute. I am Ariyaratne, a teacher at Nalanda College. The shramadana campaign ..."

"I know. Take a seat."

"No. I came in a hurry. I have no regard for caste, racial, religious or political differences. What I want is a partner who would sacrifice her life for the causes I have in mind and help me to reform society. I feel that your daughter Neetha will fill the gap. I did not ask her. If you agree please let me know later. Now my mind is free. Good bye!"

Mr. Hemapala Alpitirachchi, who owned a photo studio at Kuliyaipitiya, stood there like a figure hewn out of granite. I left after paying my obeisances. I walked to the car in haste. Mr. Katugampola got out of the car, laughing. It was then that I knew that the girls had come running after me. I told him that we should leave but Mr. Katugampola lit a cigar and said, "Why such a hurry?"

There were two magazines in the car. "*Kurukshetra*" and "*Link*". I gave "*Kurukshetra*" to Chitra, and "*Link*" to Neetha saying: "Remember that word." Then I added that I came to give their father a message and got Mr. Katugampola to finally drive away with me. Back in Manawa camp, I relegated all the events of the day to the back of my mind and worked. It was a two-week long camp.

Photo 165:
Mr. Hemapala Alpitirachchi
and Mrs. Jane Ratnayake



A Tea Party

The next day something unexpected happened. I got a letter from Mr. Alpitirachchi, the proprietor of Chitra Studio in Kuliyaipitiya, inviting me with my campers for tea at his house on our way back after the camp. I was asked to indicate the number in the crowd. I sent an apt reply thanking him for the invitation.

I realized that some unseen hand was behind it all – the dream, my conversation with Mr. Hemapala, my gifting "*Link*" to Neetha. Love had entered my empty heart not in a sentimental way but in a more scientific way that had its roots in destiny.

Except for Mr. Katugampola and Mr. Abeysekera, the others did not know of this development. Mr. Abeysekera did not like it when he got to know. We had biscuits, cheese and tea at Neetha's house on the way back. A photograph taken that day was with me till recent times. Some medical students such as Mahinda Jayasinghe. Nalanda College students such as Sunil Wickremetunga, Sarath Munasinghe, Kulatunga Uluwita, Gamini Katugampola, Jayawickrema Perera and Ananda Weerasekera were suspicious about why we came to this house and also of the special attention Neetha showered on me. Mr. Hemapala promised to come and see me when he was coming to admit his children to the boarding places before school commenced after the vacation.

Neetha's father's name is Alpitirachchige Hemapala. Her mother's name is Ratnayake Mudiyansele Jane Ratnayake. Her maternal grandfather's name is Ratnayake Mudiyansele Tikiri Banda Ratnayake whose wife was named Jayasekera

Photo 166:
Neetha with her
sisters
Chithra, Vajira,
Vinitha and
Suvineetha



Mudiyansele Ranmenika Jayasundera. All the children in Neetha's family were girls. The eldest was Chitra Iranganie. The second was Neetha Dammachari, her younger sisters were named Vinitha Ratnavali, Suvineetha Padmini and Vajira Priyanganee.

In the House Under the Breadfruit Tree

Back at my house under the breadfruit tree I tidied it to be fit enough to welcome Neetha's family. They in turn kept their promise and visited me – Mr. Hemapala, his wife, Jane Ratnayake, daughters Chitra, Neetha, Vinitha, Suvineetha and Vajira. A request was made to me to help Neetha in her weak subjects but there was no talk yet regarding our future together. Still we were not that intimate and I had no chance to talk to Neetha alone.



Photo 167: Neetha with her family
members in the Peradeniya gardens

Our Friendship Grows

At this time there was a display of the Agrasravaka relics at the Mahabodhi Mandira in Maligakande. I met Neetha there. She had come with Chandra, in

her father, Mr. Ananda Semage's car. Neetha came to my house that day and told me that if her parents do not oppose, she would like to marry me. I told her what I had told her father. That was how we came to a clear agreement on our life.

Our friendship grew by leaps and bounds. I went to Musaeus College and helped Neetha in her studies. During vacations I visited her at home. I acted as their driver when they were going on pilgrimage. So during these months we got to know each other very well.

Once I fell ill at a camp in Manawa and was taken to a room in Neetha's house. The doctor Dr. N.M.P. Mendis, pronounced that I had chicken pox and I decided to immediately go back to my home in Unawatuna. I drove with Mr. Abeysekera in Mr. Hemapala's car. I used to write poems to Neetha from Unawatuna which I reproduce here as they reflected my thoughts at that time.



Photo 168 :
Dr. N.M. P. Mendis



Photo 169 :
Dr. Gamini Abeysekera who wrote the
lyrics of Vinoba Bhava theme song
is seen with Neetha, his wife and myself

A Maturing Love

On society

*The mere fact of factors at birth – labelled some high others low
For thousands of years in Lanka – this abuse surged forth*

*Those bloated with pride of their high birth status – decried those
low as Sadol (the untouchables)*

*Thousands downtrodden in our society – today live neglected
and sequestered*

On myself

*A youth went once in search of the huts of the untouchables
Dedicating his life to their welfare
He forsook youth comforts and luxuries acting poor
to help others in distress*

*Regardless of the future and away from his relations
Shunning parents all loved ones his home and hearth
Marriage wealth fame and praise
He ended up a warrior in a mighty battle*

*He grew old day by day dreaming these dreams
Of helping the untouchables roaming the roads naked and
starving
Reciting tales of woe
Elders, young ones, infants – all helpless as animals*

*The Colombo Seven lady he abhors as she satiates worldly desires
Eating fancy foods drinking alcohol
Covering her (rotting) body with silks and fabrics*

*His heart has no place for these dames
Disliking young women was his habit
though he was with them often
Their coy looks the swinging rhythmic walk
The bell like sound of their voices that entice males
To them
They were just sinful traps*

How he saw her

*King Sakra gazing at the world of humans with a thousand eyes
Seeing me so solitary gives an order to the goddesses to show me*

*A beautiful and virtuous one amidst them – spouse to this human
in an earlier birth
Getting overcome with pity – decides to come down*

*Leave granted from the Court of Gods she descends to the world
of humans
And my life she embellishes as she would her Thidas City*

*Now all sadness has left me and my life and hers are entwined
the world is a gay place now and there is no sorrow*

*She is indescribable very reverend blemishless woman of all three
worlds
Dhammachari, Light of Love Be my wife throughout samsara!*

Letter

*Her own joys and sorrows and others' joys and sorrows
She viewed in the same light sharing my joys
and sorrows as her own*

*Selfless work to help others she felt her duty
Seetha Vishaka who lived in days of yore
Neetha belongs to that ilk
Neetha, May the Triple Gem bless You!*

*My body is weak my mind dulled
And in pain I lie, life has turned to death! Sarasvati,
Goddess of learning and aesthetics
And poetry, come to my rescue!*

*Five months ago I built a fortress
Where all battles fought ended victorious
Now that fortress is in ruins, weathered sadly
And I myself lie sprawled on a bed*

*Bubbles sprout all over my body
Fuming with anger like little soldiers with daggers
And swords, their attacks
I tolerate with forbearance*

*That day at Manawa if I knew this to be the disease
I would not have come to your house
for I could have spread
my disease*

*When your father got to know my disease
He showed no scare but showered me with care and affection
Dhammi! Life is so, it revolves round
Joy and sorrow, so let us cross it together bonded by love*

*I bathe about six times in the morning
and partake of food prepared by mother and aunts
I do not get out
So my life drifts on
I invoke blessings of the Triple Gem
On Chitra, Vinitha, Suvinitha and little Vajira
Also on your parents and you!*

*One day
One day when forces of Shramadana were active
like an army they had built a fortress
And they sweated over their work
Then princess Neetha walked into my life*

*The recess of my heart
illuminated gradually and rejuvenated
As I decided to accept
Your entry into my life*

*A force named Destiny
Linked our lives forever
On the tree called Service Dhammi and Ruwan
Are two fruits that flourish*

*A pleasant smile adorns your face
The blue gems of your eyes reflecting purity
Dhamsari, you are the light of my Life
Radiating lustre on it!*

*On the pretext of worshipping
The Agasav relics with Navaratna I came to see you
Can you remember the joys of love
we garnered that day*

*When I sent word that I was ill
you visited me bosom aglow with agony
in the dark you were by me
That cured me then can you remember, I went with you*

*In the school verandah
Sitting like a cat on the sly
thirty seconds you waited there
I sensed the love ticking within you*

*Letters by the galore you send
Saying there is so much to tell
But when I come, silent and amused you are
How you harassed me!
In the Manawa camp
Seated on a mat
I remember you gazing at me*

*Deep in thought
The week end before my Indian yatra
can you remember how you cried*

*Overcome with affection
And bade me adieu
Dear Dhamsarini
You are mine and I am yours
till your life supports me I live
And once it is I gone I too depart*

*By the river
Splendour of nature reigns the silent sleepy world
Rivers gush down spawning whirls cooling the environs
The sun that emanated light dips in the ocean
Love struck ones forget the world about them at this moment*

*The fluttering willows on the banks betray the lurking wind
The birds take wings to the skies in the falling dusk
Two ripening stalks of paddy entwine
Lovers looking for sweetness in days to come embrace*

*The world is beautiful sweet glorious and magnificent
Love reigns humanity suffused with high mores
Fragrance wafts from young hearts
The sweetness of amour the lips take over*

*His eyes beneath thick eye brows rest on
The sun dropping onto the ocean
Her face rests on his chest he touches her soft hair
She is like the Goddess of Love just enthroned
Consecrated as the queen of Love with a coronet of gold
Embellished with flowers and other ornaments (of love)
Her mind light and relaxed and so child like
May God Sakra look after this pair*

How Our Marriage Took Place

I realized that many including Mr. Abeysekera had gotten to know about our courtship. So one day on my way to Manawa I took Mr. Karunananda along and introduced members of Neetha's family to him. Having revealed everything to Mr. Karunananda I got his blessing too. I also got the blessing of my Bappochchi at Talawakele. My parents gave their blessing immediately on seeing Neetha.

Yet an obstacle arose. My idea had been to send Neetha to the Gandhigram, give her training, then get married and get her to strengthen our movement. But destiny had it otherwise. So in the midst of opposition by Neetha's mother, we decided to only register our marriage. The ceremony was to be held later.

A Wedding

It was a day in July 1960. I got Punchi akka to sew all the dresses needed by Neetha. I accumulated all the house equipment needed for a young couple. Only those closest to the family were invited for the wedding.

Despite the age gap between us a deep friendship existed between Mr. Karunananda and me. I never hid anything in my life from him. Those days on his way back from school, he used to come to my home. The Swabasha Book shop was near our house along the Maligakande Road. The printing of his books was handled by this book shop. Hence whenever I returned home I began to expect his visit at any moment.

The week before the wedding all my house members were busy putting the final touches on the repairs to the house. Mr.

Photo 170:
Mr. Karunananda
attesting at our
marriage



Karunananda made some gestures expressing surprise and queried whether we were getting ready for a function. I replied that there was to be a wedding next week.

“Don’t tell me it is you,” he said in a bit of amazement.

“Yes. I am getting married in a few days. On July 25th, Sir, you must come to YMBA to attest to my marriage. I was intending to inform you tomorrow.”

July 25th was just like any other day. Neetha came and stayed at our home with my sisters. Her parents were to arrive at 1.30 pm. I had kept a white sarong and white shirt ready, and then went to school.

Mr. Karunananda, on seeing me, sent for me and asked why I came to the school on that day. He added that I should inform the other teachers about the marriage at least on that day. I agreed and went from class to class informing them of my impending wedding, and inviting them to come home in the evening if time allowed. Some thought it was a joke. Some believed it. I told them that they would only get a cup of tea pre-



Photo 171: At the YMBA on
July 25, 1960. In the background is
my father



Photo 172:
Our wedding photograph

pared from a tea packet sent by Mr. Titus Ratnayake of Deniyaya and hence asked them not to bring gifts.

I worked until 1.20 pm. at school, then hired a taxi and went home, had lunch, then hired two taxis for the family members, sent Neetha in her family car and all of us arrived at the YMBA, in Borella.

Mr. Karunananda and Mr. Stanley Fernando were the attesting witnesses at the wedding. The Marriage Registrar Mr. G.P. Kariyawasam made a fine speech blessing us. My intimate friends such as Dharmasena Senanayake, Kamal Dissanayake, M.A. Tillakaratne and

Dharma Gunasinghe were there. Neetha's father, himself, took some photographs whose whereabouts nobody knows now. Yet a photo I took with my own camera using a self timer is still with me.

A Pinkama at Vajiraramaya

From the YMBA the two of us went to Vajiraramaya in Mr. Dharmasena Senanayake's Peugeot car. I had told some students to come to this temple with flowers and incense but I had not told them the reason. The boys were there replete with the pooja necessities.

The Most Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Mahanayake Thero and Ven. Narada Maha Thero and the other monks made us observe pansil and worship the Triple Gem. Then flowers were offered and chanting of Pirith commenced. It was only that day that they knew that we had gotten married.

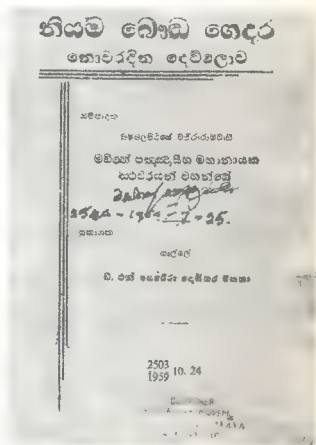


Photo 173: Book gifted by
Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha
Mahanayaka Thero on our
wedding day

Photo 174:
The 40th Anniversary
of our wedding, two of us
visiting prelate Madihe
Pannaseeha Mahanayake
Thero on July 25, 2000
with the book gifted to us



Two Pieces of Advice

The Most Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Mahanayake Thero gave us two pieces of fine advice. This was the first:

"When two people live together, it is natural to get angry. But only one party should get angry at a time. Then the other party should be patient." The other advice was: "If your eyes and ears tell that your husband or wife is behaving suspiciously do not believe your eyes and ears but believe him or her." What he meant by that was implicit trust in each other.

An Excellent Wife

That was the core of the great prelate's advice. Because Neetha followed that advice to the letter far exceeding me in this respect, she and I and our six children today belong to one of the happiest families in the world.

I have violated these pieces of advice but Neetha has not given up on me. She did not believe her eyes. Alert to my flaws yet tolerating them, she directed me always on the right path without using a single aggressive word. She is really a great example to women who transform their families here on earth.

It was about 4.00 pm when we returned home from the temple. Between 2.00 pm. and 4.00 pm, a great transformation had taken place in the House Under the Breadfruit Tree. Weere malli was the catalyst behind it.

He had spent forty two rupees and had brought refreshments from the Bake House. He had the house decorated and even had a



Photo 175:

A still from the First Sri Lankan International Award Winning feature film 'Gamperaliya.' Gamini Fonseka is in the left

flower cracker (a flower filled with confetti) ready at the threshold of the house. Mrs. P. E. Perera, wife of the owner of the house, had brought a wedding cake and drinks and had arranged a big party. Word had spread and without any invitation there were many school friends: Mrs. Somie Meegama, film stars Gamini Fonseka and Arthur Vanlangenberg and many pupils.

By this time Mr. Abeysekera, my friend, had drifted away from me. But since I thought it was my duty to inform him I did so, but as he had to attend a Saukyadana meeting held at Mrs. Kusala Abeywardena, he came late.

The plan of Neetha's parents had been to register our wedding and take Neetha home. But as there were many visitors and because Neetha's mother was in a hurry to get back, they went off at about 6.30 pm leaving Neetha with me. Though Neetha had brought clothing sufficient only for two days in addition to her trousseau there was no alternative for her but to stay.

I Sleep Under the Breadfruit Tree

Colonel M.C.F. Abeykoon, Mr. P. B. Balasuriya and Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe and a few other teachers left the house past



Photo 176:
Gamini Fonseka and I in recent times

10.30 pm. After everybody had left I searched for my bride and found her sleeping with my punchi akka on my bed. Others were sprawled in various places and snoring heavily. I switched off the lights, found an old mat and a worn out pillow, asked Jayawickrema, the boy who helped me, to sleep in the verandah and spreading the mat under the bread fruit tree slept there under the canopy of nature. Like other nights, sleep came to me easily.

The only expense I had incurred for my wedding was the hire of the two taxis up to Borella YMBA from Maradana. Along with what Weere malli had spent the total expense was about 50 Rupees. Today when I notice the exorbitant expenses incurred for weddings, I often think of our very simple wedding.

Mrs. P. E. Perera was a lady of much religious fervour. It was she who exerted herself for our wedding and also who spent the most. When our first child was born, sensitive to our needs, she gifted the child with dresses sufficient for months.

Shramadana from Village to Village

Among the gifts received at our wedding was about 700 to 800 rupees in cash. That very day a camp at Kanatoluwa was scheduled, to be followed the next week by a camp at Kanana, Malambe and the subsequent week at Waturawa in Deniyaya. These camps we had organized without the backing of the Rural Development Department.



Photo 177:
Mrs. Mukta Wijesinghe

All the money we were given, we spent on buying dresses for the school children of Kanatoluwa and that evening itself we set off with teachers and pupils to Nalanda College. Now the two of us, legally united could work together without being subject to rumours. The details of these camps are more imprinted in the memory of Mrs. Sita Rajasuriya and Neetha, and I hope they would write their own memoirs one day.

From the day after our wedding, we were just involved in our routine work. There was no "Honeymoon" for us!

Actually the Honeymoon period was spent by doing Shramadana work and helping the needy.

The training Neetha got under Mrs. Rajasuriya, the Chief Girl Guide Commissioner, went a long way in helping our Movement. My plan to get her trained at Gandhigram in India was sabotaged by the very ones close to me. Yet this incident only proved a challenge to our work, giving us the impetus to go on despite all obstacles.



Photo 178:
Mr. Sam Wijesinghe

Devendra Das Chopra was an individual I met on my 1958 visit to India. He lived along Rothak Road in New Delhi . He used his home as the Asian office for Service Civil International. Chopra was the Asian Secretary at the time. I got an urge to hold a joint camp with this organization. The one-month Manawa camp of April 1960 was a result of this desire.

As a rehearsal for this camp, a preliminary short term camp was held earlier. The first foreign visitor to this camp was a Swiss youth named Theodore Von Fellenberg. He first resided at my home in Maradana. Mr. Abeysekera and his family,



Photo 179:
Dr. Basil Seneviratne at
the Health camp



Photo 180:
Dr. Lakshman De Silva, the architect
of the Health camp

Miss Leela Batt from India, a medical student named Mahinda Jayasinghe and Nalanda College students worked in this camp.

After Mrs. Rajasuriya, Mrs. Muktha Wijesinghe who became the Girl Guides Commissioner worked with unfailing dedication for the cause of the Sarvodaya Movement. She, the wife of Mr.

Sam Wijesinghe, the ex-Secretary-General of Parliament and the first Ombudsman, participated in several of our camps.

It was in the Manawa camp that I got chicken pox and had to leave. I think I got the infection from Dr. Basil Seneviratne at the first Saukyadana (gift of health) camp. During my recovery at home I heard that discipline in the camp had collapsed. A group who had been invited by Mr. Abeysekera had been responsible for the lack of discipline. Immediately, I returned and I sent this group away, making Mr. Abeysekera also leave. The alienation of the SCI organization and Mr. Abeysekera from Sarvodaya took place this way. The Saukyadana Organization later broke away from Sarvodaya.



Photo 181:
I, at the first Siripa Health camp



Photo 182:
Dr. Lakshman De Silva, Mr. Stanley Fernando and Mr. Tarzie Jayasinghe at the first Siripa camp

Beginning of Saukyadana

I think it fit to record the genesis of Saukyadana. Mr. Gnana-sena, a student in my class, informed me several times that a young doctor, one Dr. Lakshman De Silva desired to meet me. So, I visited him at Battaramulla where he informed me of a thought that had entered him on a pilgrimage to Sri Pada: to establish First Aid Shramadana camps for the welfare of the pilgrims.

"We will start a Saukyadana (Gift of Health) Movement there,

Doctor, not Shramadana" I told him. The doctor flushed with enthusiasm, got up praising the idea and asked me how to set about it.

"It is a small thing. You find the doctors, nurses and medicine and I will find volunteers and food. This vacation we will get it going."

Dr. Lakhman De Silva worked in the Colombo Eye Hospital at that time. We got together several evenings and framed a constitution for the Saukyadana Movement. The first meeting was held at Nalanda stadium. Mr. Abeysekera, though disapproving, came for the meeting. There were others like Dr. W.A.S. Silva who attended this first meeting.

Next Dr. Silva and I met Arnolis aiya, who ran Arunadisi Hotel at Hyde Park Corner. He gave us five sacks of rice as a gift. Then we met a friend of mine, Mr. G.D. Wickremeratne, who ran the Royal Confectionary at Kelaniya. He gave us 3 sacks of sugar. Mr. M. A. Piyatissa, who owned Bake House, donated spices and all the rest of the equipment and medicines were donated by Dr. P.R. Anthonis. All these were stored at Nalanda College. And off we went for the Siripa Saukyadana camp which began on March 9, 1960, organized by the Nalanda Social Service League.



Photo 183:
Dr. P.R. Anthonis



Photo 184:
Dr. W.A.S. Silva

Siripa Camp

Our base camp was at Gartmore Estate Bungalow belonged to Dr. H.C.H. De Zoysa. We were so strong in mind and body at these days that we could climb Sri Pada three times in a day. On the first day, had a novel experience. Specialists with the highest medical degrees such as W.A.S. Silva, H.M.P. Guneratne, Basil Seneviratne, K. N. Seneviratne, nurses, volunteer workers and girl guides were with us.

But we had left behind the medicine parcel at Gartmore Bungalow! We improvised by buying peppermint packets from shops in the area, and packeting them and distributing them to pilgrims. All kinds of ailments had been cured by this simple packet. The next day, the medicine parcels were sent to us. We used to often look back and laugh at what happened that first day.

The first two Saukyadana camps were organized by the Social Service League of Nalanda college after which the Saukyadana movement became independent. After my marriage, the first camp I organized was a camp at Kanatoluwa. Then came the Kanana Malambe camp in Kalutara district.



Photo 185:
Prof. K. N. Seneviratne



Photo 186:
Mrs. Venetia Gamage



Photo 187:
Mr. Upali Senanayake (l) at a shramadana camp



Photo 188:
Mr. Stanley Fernando is in right

A Good Lesson

Kanana Malambe Camp

It was a monk named Pathberiya Indrananda Thero who first informed me about Kanana.

According to his letter to me Kanana was a village noted for crime. The village had 35 Island Re-convicted Criminals (IRCs), hailing from 29 families. The chief occupations were killing of stolen cattle, illegal tapping of others' rubber estates and theft. Literacy was at a very low level. During the last few years, nine murders had taken place.

The Police entered this village fully armed. One man had been brutal enough to slaughter another man, cut off his hand and surrender to Police with that hand. After I read the letter, I got an urge to visit Kanana.

Since the village was in Kalutara district it was with Mr. Albert Wijegunewardena that I visited it. We stopped the car by the road and were proceeding to the village along a foot path when we met a short thin man in the thick of a rubber estate. We were trousered, yet the man very disrespectfully just brushed past us.

It is customary in our country to be very respectful to any one who is wearing trousers. Such beings are addressed as Mahaththaya (Gentleman). That he did not care for this apparel pleased me.

"Where are you thamusela going?" he asked. He used the term "thamuse " instead of mahaththaya. The word 'thamusela' means 'you' but is a disrespectful term.

I told my friend that I would answer and replied "To the village of Kanana."



Photo 189: Ven. Pathberiya
Indrananda Thero

"For what? And who are you (thamusela)?"

"Why are you so angry? Can't you guess who we might be?"

He appeared a bit flustered at this, then said, "You must be government officers. You come during

yala and *maha* seasons. (*yala* and *maha* are the seasons for paddy cultivating) You take down data and then you disappear. A new one comes. He does the same. So it goes on and on."

"You are wrong. We are not government officers. Guess again."

"Then maybe an election is approaching. You have come to beg for votes. We never saw you after the last elections. Go away and beg somewhere else for the votes!"

"You are wrong again," I said laughing. "We are not electioneering. Just guess again."

Now the man looked thoroughly confused.

"Then you are from the Criminal Investigation Department, and have come to pursue the wrong doers."

Again I said he was wrong and added, "Now a new set of people who are neither state officers nor Police officers nor politicians are visiting villages. Our practice is to have an overview of these oppressed villages, locate deficiencies and help them. We are just two of them."

The youth immediately changed as if by a magic formula.

"I will go back to the village with you two mahaththayas and collect the others."

It was Poson Poya day (the day that the Aarahat Mahinda brought the message of Buddhism to Sri Lanka). I sat on a rocky bed and explained to the Kanana villagers how, since Aarahat Mahinda brought the message of Buddhism to our country, our paths have changed and how the village could work as a pioneer to adjust ourselves to face new challenges. Then, having scheduled a date for holding a camp, we returned home.



Photo 190: The road we constructed to the village of Kanana

A Selection by Mr. Karunananda

The Principal of Ananda College, Mr. Karunananda, had received a long letter from the Director of Rural Development, discouraging the holding of this camp saying that the children's lives could be in danger. But we were not alarmed or scared as we had disassociated ourselves from Mr. Abeysekera and the Rural Development Department by this time. A man named Mr. Wijegunewardena was adamant about running the camp. Later Mr. Abeysekera and Dr. Lakshman De Silva came to see Mr. Karunananda and asked him not to go ahead with the camp. I heard bits of the discussion.

"Mr. Karunananda, either you choose me and the Rural Development Department or you choose Ariyaratne" said Mr. Abeysekera.

I heard Mr. Karunananda pushing his chair back and saying angrily, "I have chosen Ariyaratne."

Mr. Karunananda saw me as he emerged from the office, and asked me whether everything was ready for the camp, then added "I too am joining."

The Shramadana That Built Unity

About 300 Shramadana volunteers took a train to Alutgama, from where we proceeded by special buses to Kanana - Malambe. When we got off the train, about 400 to 500 people had thronged along the roadside. Already a mini war had begun. A crowd led by Mr. Wilmot Jayanetti from Malambe wanted us not to go to Kanana while another crowd from Kanana said that we should not work in Malambe.



Photo 191:

Mr. Wilmot Jayanetti and Mr. Wijegunewardana at Malambe Kanana camp

Mr. Wijegunewardana further clarified matters to me. Having given instructions to prepare food, I summoned a Pavul Hamuwa (family gathering).

After bhavana (meditation) of a few minutes that was followed by a two and half hour discussion, I got permission to work in both villages. This was an unexpected victory.

The camp began the next morning. The Kanana group helped in constructing the Malambe road and the Malambe group helped to build the Kanana Road. In fact Mr. Wilmot Jayanetti himself came that morning to Kanana ending a long drawn out vendetta. In fact it was in Mr. Jayanetti's house that a group of people hitherto outcast had dinner. Inspector G.J.E. Fernando of Katukurunda Police Training School played a major role in the camp.

Thilak Ratnayaka Aiya - a True Patriot

After having successfully concluded the Kanana-Malambe camp, we went on to Wathurawa in Deniyaya. A camp had been organized under the leadership of Mr. Titus Ratnayake, one of those who had begun to correspond with me after the publicity that Kanatoluwa camp had drawn. He was an old boy of Mahinda College, and the bond of the school strengthened our friendship. His dream was to introduce Sarvodaya to Morawaka Korale and a camp materialized from this dream.

The camp venue was the Pallegama temple and a few improvised tents. About 200 attended this camp and we had a very successful session.

Two of Us Are "Stranded"

The two of us (Neetha and I) were invited one day for dinner at Mr. Ratnayake's house. It was past 9 pm when it was over.



Photo 192: At Wathurawa camp



Photo 193: Thilak aiya crafting the village to Waturawa

After our wedding, I never found the time to talk to Neetha in a quiet place. So here we began chatting and unknown to us, Mr. Ratnayake had sent everybody else back. When we had stopped chatting and looked around only the cook was to be seen. Every one else had disappeared. There was no way of getting back to the camp. The cook informed us that his master had left on an urgent matter, telling him to ask me to look after the house and instructing the cook to prepare our meals.

It had been a deliberate plan. So, in a new house built on top of a mountain in the Ratnayake estate, the two of us were stranded in the most tranquil of landscapes. So the opportunity of indulging in intimate chat, in behaving as husband and wife and in planning our future, finally came our way after three weeks of marriage.



Photo 194: Mr. F.L. Woodward

Two days later, Thilak aiya (Mr. Titus Ratnayake) arrived in his blue Benz car with a broad grin on his round face and said, 'This is fine work, saying that you are running a camp while the two of you set up camp here avoiding all of us.'

To Thilak aiya, Mr. F.L. Woodward, who headed Mahinda College, was almost a god. Thilak aiya was a man imbued with a global per-



Photo 195: Shramadana workers congregated at the residence of Mr Thilak Ratnayake of Kolawenigama

spective in his thinking. But he disciplined his ideas in such a way that they would not collide with Morawak Korale, (an administrative division of the government) with the Sinhala race, or with Buddhism. Once, one lakh was paid to him as compensation when the State took over one of his tea estates. With this money, he established a Woodward Memorial Fund in the custody of Sarvodaya. The income from this fund is today invested in religious activities.

In 1976 when I fell ill and was warded in Durdans Hospital for about 3 months, Titus aiya was a regular visitor. He used to look around and always leave something wrapped in a handkerchief in my hand. Then he asked me to wish it to be sold for a big price and would take it back. When I got out of the hospital, I saw a new house was under construction on a small plot of land we had. Thilak aiya had provided



Photo 196:
A shramadana group with Neetha



Photo 197:
A group returning from the camp

most of the building materials, according to Neetha. What he had placed in my hand were gems. In fact he was running a gem shop at Kollupitiya for some time. He told me later that when he placed the gems in my hand and took them back, they fetched a big price.

His plans for the development of our villages and our mother country were myriad and endless. Some, he actually put into practice. But the fact that he lives in a society that looks askance at the motives of such persons led to many many factors hampering the utilisation of Tītus aiya in the service of his country.

Joining the Bhoodan Yatra

When I went to India in 1957 I bought a number of books, mostly from the Gandhi bookshop in New Delhi, written by and written on Gandhi, Vinobha Bhave and Sri Jayaprakash Narayan. Again in 1959, I went to India with Dharma Gunasinghe. By this time I had run four camps at Kanatoluwa, two camps at Manawa and one camp each at Panichchenkerni in Batticaloa, in Akarella off Opanayake and at Sri Pada.

While running these camps, I exerted myself to discover a common national philosophy, a set of shramadana techniques, a new cultural paradigm that included musical compositions. I not only thought of them, but wrote on them and discussed the possibility of new vistas in these areas with many learned ones. My confinement to a sick bed had polluted my first international camp with politics. So I took extra care not to name all camps after my 11th camp as shramadana camps. Realizing that it was impossible to run a movement of national dimensions within the narrow limits of the Nalanda College Social Service League, I established an office at 493, Maradana Road, Borella.

Every Friday evening, we met in the upper storey of our house. Among those who thus gathered were Mr. M. W. Karunananda, Prof. I. G. Hewage. Mr. M. A. Tillakaratne, Mr. Dharmasena Arampatta, Head of Kumara College, Mr. Bogoda Premaratne, head of Royal College, Mr. Dharmasena Senanayake and Mr. Piyasoma Medis. Later we came to be known as the Sarvodaya Educational Circle and our discussions were published in book form.

Deep in my mind I had a plan. That was to meet personally followers of Gandhi such as Sri Jayaprakash Narayan and to get a feel of their philosophy. My participation in the seminar held in New Delhi in October 1959 on the theme: "New Education Philosophy" fulfilled this ambition. I got Dharma Gunasinghe, to join me. We went by train. In Delhi we were joined by Prof. U.D. Jayasekera, lecturer, K. Nesiah, Mr. H.D. Sugathapala and Mr. W.M.A. Warnasuriya, director of education and a few others.



Photo 198:
In India with Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe

The opening speech was made by Dr. Shri Rajendra Prasad, first President of India who also inaugurated the seminar. The next lecture was delivered by Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru. Dr. Shri Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, famous philosopher and Vice President of India and some other Indian leaders were the other speakers.

There were about 1000 participants and Dharma Gunasinghe and I were probably the youngest of the lot. Other than the main session there were workshops too. In one, the speech made by Mr. K. Nesiah highlighted certain population percentages with which I could not agree, however I did not criticise him directly



Photo 199:
Meeting President
Dr. Shri Rajendra Prasad

Photo 200:
With Prime Minister
Shri Jawaharlal Nehru,
I am in the last row
(3rd from left),
(first row from left)
Prof. G. Ramachandran,
Mrs. Rathi Danapala and
Mr. K. Nesiah are seated.



but made amends for non-criticism by showing some flaws in his percentage calculations. Though he reprimanded me later for this until his death, our association continued.

A significant result of this Conference was the chance I got to know personally Prof. G. Ramachandran, who made a special lecture on the Wardha education system. It was from him that I heard the word Sarvodaya first analysed. He compared the awakening of Sarvodaya to the blossoming of a lotus flower. The ideas embedded in Sarvodaya he compared to petals which, when fully opened up, were tantamount to the blooming of the complete flower.

Without much effort I was drawing a parallel between this idea and my own Buddhist philosophy. Buddha's words "*Sabbe Saththa Sukee Honthu*" ("May all beings be well and happy") can be reckoned as the basis of the development of a full personality. The four *Brahma Viharanas* (Four sublime states) as a totality can be used to encompass the path from the family to the global society. Into this paradigm enters *Satara Sangraha Vasthu* (Four Principles of Social Conduct) almost involuntarily. At the end of the lecture I met the speaker and thanked him profusely.



Photo 201: Mr. Devendra Kumar
Gupta with the children



Photo 202: At Buddhagaya

The Sri Lankan High Commissioner in India at this time was Sir Richard Aluvihara, a former Chief of Police. Our group met him. We went to a junction called Chandani Chauk and bought two bouquets of flowers for one rupee. One was handed to Mrs. Aluvihare and another to her daughter, Mrs. Osmund De Silva (Ena De Silva) by me. The First Secretary at this time was Mr. A. Basnayake and one day when I went to the High Commissioner's office he shared his packet of rice with me.

I asked help from this office to meet Vinoba Bhave and the High Commissioner put me on to a Deputy Minister of Punjab named Sharma. Mr. Sharma gave me information on the buses going to Punjab and arranged for a person in Sharsha district to meet me. That person did not turn up and I was stranded.



Photo 203:
The cycle-rick-
shaw I hired in
India

Photo 204:
Pond where
Buddha bathed



Everything happens for the best. I spoke to a gentleman who came there in a jeep just then, a lecturer at Punjab University who was also Secretary of the Bhoodan Committee. It was a very cold evening. This gentleman put me in his jeep and dropped me at the camp where Vinoba Bhave was that night. I slept there covered by many blankets. I have never used so many blankets in my life. At 5.00 am I got up. Everybody was up and sitting down. Vinoba Bhave sat before all of them. Immediately after the meeting I tried to talk to Vinoba Bhave but his secretary, a young woman prevented me saying that since he is ill these days he does not talk with anyone. I waited till she was out of sight and went straight to him through another door and spoke to him. He went on questioning me endlessly – about the races, religions, languages, political parties etc. and finally said that when all these things are multiplied the value of Sri Lanka is zero.



Photo 205:
Asoka pillar

Photo 206:
Dharmapala statue



That displeased me but then he asked when zero gets divided by one what the number was. I replied “Infinity.” Then he said there are infinite ways of improving our country. There was no use depending on another country for this. Just make use of the Dhammapada. “Where is your Dhammapada?” he asked. I knew many stanzas of the Dhamma pada by heart by this time and I told him so. Then he recited a stanza from it and told me to keep a copy of the Dhammapada always at hand. A stanza in Dhammapada, “Ekena Bhoge Bhunjeyya,” (“One fourth of one’s earnings should be used for day-to-day consumption purposes, two fourths should be invested in the enterprise one is doing and one fourth should be conserved to be used at a time of great need”) later became the basis



Photo 207:
Dharmapala Road

of the Sarvodaya bank system. He advised me to build a new path for my country through national values and national development.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave got up and began the *Pada yatra* (walk) in the village of Jamal. I put my bag in a jeep accompanying the yatra and walked about 5 miles. Finally we reached the village of Nirvan, I reaching it last. Vinoba had already sat on a little hilltop and was explaining the Dhamsak Sutra to about 300 people. He mentioned that since there was a Buddhist in the audience that he chose the first sermon of the Buddha as his theme. After his lecture many in the audience gave him their land, jewellery etc. Since details of this episode are given in Gunadasa Liyanage's "Under the Breadfruit Tree," I will not elaborate on them. He requested me to launch the *Bhoodan* Movement ('Land Gift Movement' where land owners were requested to donate a portion of their land to the landless people. Bhoo - land, Dana - donation) in my country. I told him that I had already begun the Shramadana Movement that aims at reforming society. I returned to Delhi in the company of Madam Mirdula Sarabai, former Secretary of Shri Nehru, a keen student of the Bhoodan Movement.

We later participated in the tea party held by Shri Nehru for the Sri Lankan delegation. We visited the Rastrapathi Bhavan, the Gandhi Memorial and the Birla House before returning. Dharma Gunasinghe had already returned via Bombay.

Who is Vinoba ?

People of India, gripped by the shackles of British Imperialism and impoverished, rose to the clarion call of Mahatma Gandhi. Vinoba Bhave, following the path of Gandhi, spread the message of peace instilling hope and faith in a world fissured by dissension and competition.



Photo 208:
Acharya Vinoba Bhave

Who is this Vinoba, who led a Shanthi Sena (Peace Army) across the terrain of India carrying with him only the triple weapons of Truth, Non-violence and Self-denial (the surrender of ego)? I had the good fortune to meet him. He was 65 years old but looked older due to his thin frame and overgrown beard.

He owned nothing material. "My aim," he says "is to approximate my life to zero value." His daily routine commenced at 2.00 am and ended at 11.00 pm. That is enough testimony to what he was.

There is a small town named Sharsha in the Punjab, situated about 150 miles from New Delhi. About 17 miles away from this town lies the hamlet of Jamal. Vinoba lived in a hut made out of mud in this village. I went there in the night long after he had gone to bed.

It could be the eagerness in me to meet this mentor of the Bhoodan (land gift) Movement that made me withstand the intense cold that is a climatic feature of Punjab in this time of December. When I woke up at 3.00 am, his disciples were all in



Photo 209:
Acharya Vinoba Bhave reading my letter

a meditation posture. I too joined them. The tranquil atmosphere created by the leader and his 20 acolytes just calmed my mind and body. I luxuriated in a mental happiness that I had never before enjoyed.

After meditation Vinoba Bhave addressed his audience for about half an hour. From then until about 4.30 am. they listened to a Dhamma text being recited. Then began the Pada yatra (walk) that entails walking on foot from village to village. He led the group walking ahead in a fast gait and rested at about 5.30 am. where the next meditation and sermon session took place in the open air. Again began the Pada yatra. The sun began shining and Vinoba entered another village.

Still clear in my memory is Vinoba's Pada Yatra from Jamal to Nirvan. In Nirvan he ascended silently to a temporary stage put up in the open air and sat while about a thousand people stood before him in reverent silence, their arms raised in supplication. Then they greeted him.

"Jaya Jagath Baba," (Grandfather, victory to the whole world) was the greeting. "Jaya Jagath," he answered back. After reciting a Sanskrit sloka, he talked for a few minutes. Then began the meditation session followed by pin drop silence, and from the audience, people got up and offered Vinoba land. These voluntary



Photo 210:
Acharya Vinoba Bhave in a daily address to the people

gifts ranged from quarter acre to thousands of acres. The Vinoba workers went from door to door. The villagers attested their signatures on the land gift deeds. Meanwhile Vinoba either read or attended to correspondence. He relaxed between 1 and 2 pm. At 2.15 pm. the Bhoodan disciples congregated. Then Vinoba scrutinized all the Bhoodan deeds and signed them. Some came to meet him to get advice. At 4.00 pm a meditation session took place in the open air. Thousands gathered. It was followed by a lecture on various themes such as religion, politics, world peace, unity. Questions from the audience followed which were duly answered. Vinoba himself asked questions and got replies.

He created a mental ethos that spawned declarations such as "gram sukee am sukee" ("if the villagers are happy that is our happiness.") "Our village belongs to the villagers." "Our village is one family." The evening was devoted to receiving visitors. He listened to each person and patiently made his replies. To this category of visitors belonged not only the Prime Minister of India and other ministers but esteemed persons from all over the world. I, too, was afforded a long interview with him on such an evening. The views he expressed on my queries regarding issues in our country and issues on world peace, I felt were gems burnished in a world of friction. Having learnt some very noble lessons from a truly great man, I kept my head on his feet worshipping him.

The Bhoodan workers met him again at about 9.30 pm before he dropped off to sleep. Personal ownership of land in that village is now a forgone thing. The voluntary gifting of land by rich and poor has converted the village to a Gramadan village, which is a communally owned village now. A committee is appointed to ensure its security and progress, with an officer called "Jeevan dayaka" who dedicates

his life to the Bhoodan work. Now the mentor goes to sleep, his sama vandana (peace pilgrimage) being accomplished. Next morning at 4.30 am his Pada Yatra resumes. From April in 1951 up to that day (year 1960) he has walked more than 35,000 miles on this Pada Yatra.

The life of this elderly great saint makes fascinating reading. Trudging on foot, he appeased the hunger of millions of India's poor, worked for the riddance of friction and dissension, softened the hearts of avaricious individuals crazed with greed of wealth and land and substituted Dhamma for Adhamma. Equally interesting are the narratives of the movements spawned by him, ie. the Bhoodan, the Gramadhan, the Sampattidan, the Jeevan Dan and Shanthi Sena movements.



Photo 211:
With Mr. Suresh Ram, the author of
Acharya Vinoba Bhave's biography



Photo 212:
Vinoba Bhave

Laying the Foundation for Sarvodaya Shramadana

The New City Stores in Maradana can be reached by walking for about one minute from Maradana station. So our house was very accessible to many who visited us. But we had no income to treat all of them with even a cup of tea.

Our only income was my monthly salary. Though Neetha also got an appointment at Mahabodhi College that income did not go a long way. My house rent one third of my salary, was increased later by Mr. P.A. Perera and I had to pay half of my salary as rent.

Mother used to send about two bushels of paddy twice a year from our fields. Mr. R. A. Wijegunewardena of Ovitigala in Matugama and Thilak aiya of Deniyaya used to bring rice and other food. Neetha's father, whenever he came to Colombo, would bring some rice and coconut for us. This stringent set up moulded Neetha into a very careful housewife who managed the household not only economically and cleverly but happily. Those who came to our house always enjoyed her hospitality.

I got to know Mrs. Somie Meegama as a student at Maharagama Government Training College. Once at her house we formed a Backward Communities Development Council. Dr. D.C.P. Beneragama was appointed its President, Mr. Ratna Deshapriya



Photo 213:
Mrs. Somie Meegama

and I became co-secretaries and Mrs. Meegama became the treasurer. But due because both Dr. Beneragama and Mr. Ratna Deshapriya were engaged in full-time politics, this Council did not make headway. Yet Mrs. Meegama always helped in my shramadana work and funded them. Mrs. Somie Meegama was at one time President of the All Ceylon Women's Buddhist Congress.

Neetha had no money to spend on clothes. So Mrs. Somie Meegama and Punchi akka, to the best of her ability, would buy her sarees now and then.

After Vidyodaya Pirivena was elevated to University status, the Pirivena was temporarily shifted to the middle school buildings of Nalanda. After getting permission from Mr. Karunananda, Ven. Kalukondayawe Pagnasekera Mahanayake Thero, the head of this Pirivena, entrusted to me the teaching of maths, English and health to the Pirivena students. That assured me not only the acquaintance of monks who came there from all directions in the island but also a monthly income of Rs. 200/-.

Dr. Edwin Marasinghe lived just near Nalanda and all his sons studied in the College. In my bachelor days I had my lunch and dinner at his house on his request, which was later limited to lunch. I also helped the sons with their studies. Every month Mrs. Marasinghe gave me Rs. 200, saying it was for maintenance of the Sarvodaya Movement.



Photo 214: Ven. Kalukondayawe Pannasekera Thero and Ven. Ambanwalle Pannasekera Thero on a visit to Meth Medura. Mr. P.A. Kiriwandeniya is explaining something to them

The following personnel of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Service, Mr. Karunaratne Abeysekera, Madawala S. Ratnayaka. H. M. Gunasekera, Lalith S. Maithripala, Sarath Wimalaweera and Chitrananda Abeysekera, all being my friends, got me many programmes on the radio that supplemented my income by a further Rs. 100 or so. My contributions to the newspapers also gave me a little income.



Photo 215:
Dr. Edwin Marasinghe and
Mrs. Meegama

Now that I am on the subject of the radio let me recount an incident that occurred at a reception ceremony for Mr. Chitrananda Abeysekera. He had been appointed head of the new Sinhala Service and a reception was to be held at the Dharmasala of Bellanwila Rajamaha Vihara under the patronage of its Chief Incumbent, Ven. Dr. Bellanwila Wimalaratane Thero. I got an invitation and was personally told to attend it by several people including Chitrananda Abeysekera.

At that time I had become subject of the intense wrath of President Premadasa. So I requested the organizers not to allot me a speech or a front seat. They agreed but after the meeting began Ven. Wimalaratane Thero almost forcibly got me to sit in the front row. Their request for a speech, I declined, saying that Mr. Abeysekera's appointment might get cancelled if I spoke. But the insistence was so much that I offered to narrate a story only.

The story ran as follows:

At the time a certain President was ruling Egypt, the radio blared out the whole day his speeches. Since there were no TVs at that time almost every citizen of Egypt owned a radio and listened to it with rapt attention.

There were two peasant brothers who gave constant ear to the President's speeches over a neighbour's radio. Once the harvest was bountiful and they decided to buy a new donkey to plough and a radio of their own. Then they could listen to the speeches while working.

One day the radio was missing. But the President's voice could be heard. The elder one, comprehending what had happened, told the younger one,

"Malli. all this time we have been only listening to our President. But today we can see him."

What had happened was the donkey had swallowed the radio. The audience burst out laughing and I quietly sat. Since the CID was always following me at this time along with many other shadows, I soon left the Hall.

Mr. G.D. Wickremeratne, owner of Kelaniya Royal Confectionaries, lived at Kotahena during that time. Married to Piyadasa Sirisena's daughter, he showed much depth and maturity in his character. Once he gifted me a bicycle and asked me to visit him in the evenings. The cycle was really a blessing. Soon, during my pre-marriage period, I was associating with the sons and daughters of the Wickremeratne and Marasinghe families as my own brothers and sisters. Even today this connection remains strong.

After the fame of Kanatoluwa camp, almost every school in Colombo used to invite me for talks. Dhamma schools and Social Service organizations also invited me. As a result it can be said

that between 1958 and 1961 there was probably not a single school or temple in Colombo that I had not visited. At every meeting, I strengthened my own force and got new entrants to join the next camp.

The transfer of Mr. Karunananda as Principal of Ananda College in March 1962 dealt a severe blow to my work. Then I knew that the national resurrection I had aimed at via the Social Service League of Nalanda had fallen

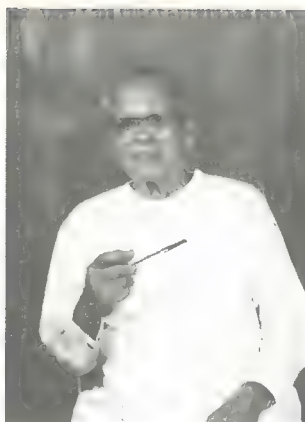


Photo 216:
Mr. G.D. Wickremeratne



Photo 217:
Mrs. G.D. Wickremeratne

by the wayside. So what I did next was to begin anew the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement from 1960 onwards using my home as its address. By then the word “shramadhana” had become a household word. In April 1960 I named my movement Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya.

That people’s law and people’s strength predominated over State law and State strength has always been a firm conviction of mine. State law is penal law and activities based on such a law are not guaranteed complete success. I believe in the law of the Dhamma and the strength of the Dhamma. I believed that lasting success would accompany such acts based on these. My ultimate aim was to get the forces of Dhamma Neethi (Dhamma law), Jana Neethi (the popular law), the Dhamma Shakthi (Power of the Dhamma) and Jana shakthi (Power of the people) to act as catalysts over and above the penal law and Raja Shakthi (State power) in moving society towards real progress.

It was in those days that I jotted down ten characteristics about contemporary society and ten characteristics that should be features of the envisaged society. I dedicated myself to creating non-violent processes and techniques that would transform the present society into an idealistic social milieu.

Shramadana was to be the first device. Its objectives were not supplementing the work of the State through unpaid labour or encouraging lazy people by getting others to do their work. Its real objective was to motivate groups, families and villages in a re-awakening of their own along with a full flowering of their personality in the process. The self involved in one’s labour had to be destroyed. One should be ready to gift labour. The Sathara Brahma Viharana and the Sathara Sangraha Vasthu that are the core teachings of Buddhism acted as my beacon light.

In this venture I was ideologically helped by Professors K.N. Jayatileka and L.G. Hewage. They explained certain philosophical ideas I couldn’t understand while that great prelate of Maussakele of Kandy, Ven. Gnanaponika Thero, helped me verbally and via correspondence.

My country, my people and my religion were always on my mind. The progress of everyone and a social system that would achieve this were my goals. The latter necessitated a wide network of activities in the fields of philosophical, technical, organizational, structural and practical spheres. My helpers here were Neetha, Dharma Gunasinghe, Dharmasena Senanayake. M.A. Tillakaratne, Kamal Dissanayake, Wijedasa Mahawatte, Col. Weerasena



Photo 218:
Ven.Gnanaponika Thero

Rajapakse, Piyasoma Medis, Alex Tennekoon, Thilak de Silva, K. Dissanayake, R. S. Udukumbura, Daya Ananda Perera, Soma de Silva, William Kandege and a few others. Most others were imprisoned in their narrow thinking for which I do not blame them. Their worldly outlook prevented them from seeing further. And at this time none of them harmed me.

Through the machinery of the Education Department and the Rural Development Department fell out the State with me and hindered my work. Behaviour lapses of students who joined my work were magnified beyond measure. I had to consolidate the Movement that we started. So I took over, myself, the posts of



Photo 219:
Prof. L.G. Hewage, Mr. M.W. Karunananda and Prof. A.D.P. Jayatileka and I

General Secretary or Organizing Secretary of Sarvodaya and made a loyal elder, the President. Then I was ready to launch my national movement unhampered.

In the meantime, I strove to equip myself with all the educational qualifications needed by a teacher. In 1955 I got through the GCE (AL) in Economics, British Constitution and Economic History with the help of Dr. Francis Pillai. Having gotten through my Matriculation at London University in 1956 and having gotten through the Intermediate exam of the same University, I registered for the BSc. degree in Economics. I also registered for the Arts Degree in Peradeniya University. In 1964 I passed the General Arts Qualification Examination of Vidyodaya University in Economics, Humanistics and Sinhala. In 1966 I sat the degree exam in Economics, Education and Sinhala. In 1968 I obtained my degree.



Photo 220:
Prof. L.G. Hewage

I did not need any further educational degrees. Since I had been conferred a First Grade Special Teachers Certificate by the

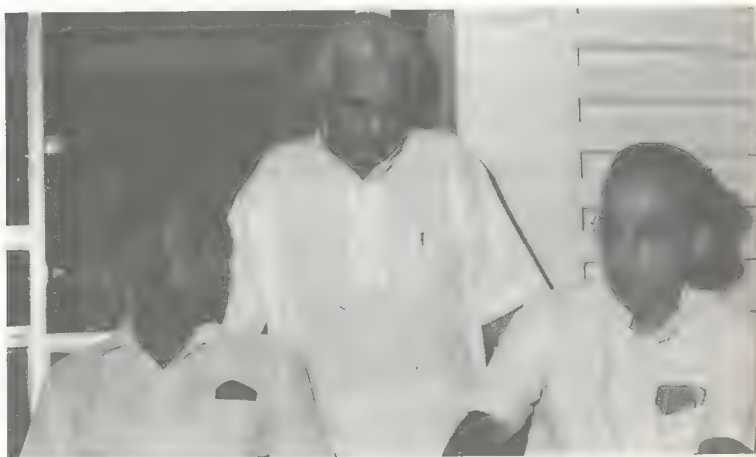


Photo 221:
Chief Secretary, Mr. D.A. Perera, Treasurer, Mr. Kamal Dissanayake and I



Photo 222: An episode at a shramadana camp

Education Minister I.M.R.A. Iriyagolla on the recommendation of Mr. Gunapala Wickremeratne, I was receiving a decent salary as a teacher.

It was at this time an office known as National Service Office under the Land Development Department was opened at Alston Road in Colombo 2. It carried out a major assignment in constructing a road in the area of Neluwa to reach Deniyaya by a shorter route. We also helped. But this national service was not popular. After this the name board at Alston Road changed to National Shramadana Service. Soon shramadana came to mean rendering unpaid labour. Now we changed the name of our camps to Sarvodaya Shramadana camps. A series of such camps were



Photo 223: Another episode at a shramadana camp

held in the year 1960 - Unawatuna (June), Kanana, Deniyaya and Wathurawa (August), Horagolla Bandaranaike Commemoration Site (September, a Saukyadana Camp), Camp at Bullers Road Dharmadutha Dharmasramaya (September), consisting of two day camp putting up the Sarana Children's Home at Bullers' Road (September), Nahalla camp in Pasdun Korale and camp at Galbokka off Moneragala (December).

All these were conducted according to Sarvodaya philosophy and principles.

By the end of 1960, the Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya had become the major voluntary service organization in the island with optimum people participation. It also became the main organization for resuscitating downtrodden villages in the country.

I must also mention the names of the following lay and ecclesiastical persons who helped me continuously or periodically. To these belong the prelates Ven. Welmille Somananda Thero, Ven.



Photo 225:
Mrs. Lakshmi Perera

Thunnana Sumanathissa Thero, Ven. Kalukondayawe Pagnasekera Mahanayake Thero, Ven. Nedelagamuwe Jinananda Thero, and Ven. Hissalle Gnanavimala Thero. To the lay group belong Messrs. P. W. Mahawatte, Cyril Ekanayake, T. W. Ratnayake, William Kandage, M. P. R. Podiappuhamy, D.S. Liyanage, P. Amerasinghe, T. S. Silva, D.A. Perera and Mrs. Soma De Silva. Mr. Sinha Perera and Mrs. Lakshmi Perera. In joy as well as in sorrow they never left me.



Photo 224:
Mr. Sinha Perera

Who is That Small Devil?

Our Work is Rational, You are Emotional

The actual situation of the Rural Development Department became an open book to us in the aftermath of the camps at Kanatoluwa, Manawa, Akarella and Panichchenkerni. Mr. Abeysekera told us that this work could not be done properly at departmental level and that the Minister had to be contacted directly.

As the Organizing Secretary of the Sarvodaya Movement I wrote asking for an appointment with the Minister. The Home Affairs Ministry at that time was in the hands of Hon. Mr. T.B. Ilangaratne. I got my appointment in an afternoon and was very cordially received by him. But I had never bargained for a meeting with several others. After a few appreciatory comments on my work he instructed the peon to let the other gentlemen in.

This group who now came and sat before me included Mr. G.V.P. Samarsinghe, Director of Rural Development, Mr. J.E.D. Madawala, Deputy Director and Mr. R. A. Abeysekera. My cordial dialogue was now replaced by a heated argument with this group on rural development issues. The policies enunciated by me were the allocation of decision making power to villagers, popular participation at all levels and using voluntary labour for all developmental work. Arguments were brought forth against all these and I had to defend myself to the best of my ability. Though the Minister remained neutral I could gauge that he had a leaning towards my views. I really had not gone there to battle with the bigwigs of rural development. But an idea expressed by Mr. Samarsinghe just tried my patience.

“Our departments work on rational premises. Voluntary organizations always are emotional.”

The whole discussion was in English. So in English I asked.

"Do you have a textile store at Dalugama?"

"Yes."

"How much do you spend there on producing a sarong?"

Mr. Samarasinghe looked at another officer and gave the answer, Rs. 12/-.

"For how much do you market this?"

No answer.

"I will tell you, the selling price is Rs. 8/-"

"If you sell a sarong with a production expense of Rs. 12/- at Rs. 8/-, can you say you work on rational premises? I visited this store last week and was amazed at the sight of heaps of sarongs destroyed by termites."

The Minister adjourned the meeting at this point and requested everyone except me to leave.

"Let us go to Parliament and have a glass of orange juice," he suggested. At the canteen in the old Parliament complex to which I was driven in the Minister's car, I had a long jaw-jaw with him on rural development. We remained very good friends until his death.

Mr. Abeysekera visited me that night and told me that Mr. Samarasinghe had asked him who that small devil was and scolded him true and proper. Eventually, however, we became friends. Later, I met Mr. Samarasinghe when he was Secretary to the Cabinet. Accompanied by his lady he handed me an orphan girl to be brought up in our "Suwa Setha". Wimala, this girl, now married and with kids, still lives and works in our Thanamalwila farm.

It is fit to record here an irony of destiny. It was Mr. G.V.P. Samarasinghe who in his capacity as Government Agent had recommended the interdiction of Mr. T.B. Ilangaratne on a matter of taking part in a strike once when the latter was a mere *kachcheri* (*kachcheri* means office of the provincial administration) clerk. Now the tables had turned with a change of positions. After my meeting with the Minister, I got to know that Mr. Samarasinghe himself had sought a



Photo 226:
Mr. T.B. Ilangaratne



Photo 227:
Mr. Maitripala Senanayake

transfer to another department.

I met the Minister on several occasions after that. Though he was a very senior statesman about 20 years older than me, we became fast friends. Letters I sent asking for permission for this and that always got a positive reply. "When I saw that the letter was from Ari, I just gave the okay with eyes closed," he would say later.

On the government's defeat in 1977 I visited Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, then Mr. Maithripala Senanayake and then Mr. T.B. Ilangaratne. All three remarked that I had never visited them when in power but that I had come now. Actually I had visited them when they won in 1970 and this was my second visit. In the intervening period for any personal matter I had never visited them.

"It is easy to visit people out of power," I quipped. When I visited Mr. Ilangaratne's house, I witnessed a sight I will never forget. The family was shifting out. The Minister, his wife Thamara and their servant were dragging out a worn out fibre filled mattress to the lorry waiting outside!

Tears Filled My Eyes

I visited them at their Nugegoda residence. Later Mr. Ilangaratne had decided to quit politics. But irrespective of party politics it must be said that this great statesman had carved his niche among our post-Independence national leaders. Historians should really give him due credit.



Photo 228:
A group of shramadana
workers

Resolution at Anuradhapura



Photo 229:
Ruwanweli Chaitya

I got to know Mrs. Pushpa Hewawitharana, President of Daya Hewavitharana Dharmadutha Sabha, through Mr. Ananda Semage, a Buddhist leader. It was Mr. Semage who funded the booklet on the Sarvodaya Movement, ghost-written by me for Mr. R.A. Wijegunewardena. On his invitation I went to disadvantaged villages with Mrs. Hewawitharana to witness the services performed by her. Once we visited some villages in Moneragala district and I helped in the construction of a charity home called "Sarana" by holding a two-day shramadana camp. One day, these two, Mrs. Hewavitharana and Mr. Semage, invited me to accompany them to Anuradhapura to attend the first meet-



Photo 230: Mr. Sirimevan Godage, MP, cutting the first sod at the camp.
Looking on is Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne

ing held after the establishment of the Anuradhapura Preservation Board. It was held at Anuradhapura Town Hall. Mrs. Hewavitharana and Mr. Semage were seated in the front row. I occupied a back seat.

On the stage were Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne, G.A., Anuradhapura, Mr. P. K. Dissanayake, Special Commissioner, the chief prelate of Atamasthana and three other monks.

The meeting had just begun. Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne saw me, got down from the stage and came up to me. Speaking in English, he said that he did not expect to see me there but as he had climbed on to the stage that he had thought of me. Then he held me tightly by the hand, led me up on the stage and made me sit by him.

After the chief prelate's speech, Mr. Wijeratne said that a person he expected was here and that he wished that person to make a special speech. He invited me to do so.

In my speech I said that it was Mr. Semage and Mrs. Hewavitharana who brought me here and that our aim should be to make Anuradhapura our capital again. It had been our capital for 1200 years, and I advocated that it be made the



Photo 231:
Mr. Ananda Semage



Photo 232:
Mr. Leel Gunasekera

most sacred Buddhist city in the world. We had already planned to stage a camp there from December 25th to January 2nd to help in the conservation and repair work. About 1000 volunteers were expected to come. And I hoped, I said, that everybody at Anuradhapura would assist the camp.

The response exceeded what I had expected. The Director of Education in Anuradhapura promised accommodation for all the shramadana volunteer workers while the District Supervisor of the Rural Development Department, Mr. Herath, volunteered meals. The Special Commissioner, Anuradhapura, Mr. P. K. Dissanayake, promised the shramadana equipment such as mammoties. A committee was also formed to look after securing supplies and providing vehicles. In addition, Mr. Leel Gunasekera, in his capacity as Assistant Government Agent of Anuradhapura, took over the organization of lectures at the camp by intellectuals of the area. Another Assistant Government Agent, Mr. K. H. J. Wijedasa and Mr. Elkaduwa in their turn took over some responsibilities.

On a fixed day about 1000 Sarvodaya Shramadana workers arrived by train at the Sacred City. From 6.00 am to 5.00 pm. we conducted a very successful camp following a regimented order and replete with bhavana (meditation), education, entertain-



Photo 233:
The Anuradhapura
shramadana



Photo 234:
Mr. Maitripala Senanayake
addressing the family
gathering. Mr. Nissanka
Wijeratne seated near him

ment and voluntary labour. The main road that leads to the city today is the road cleared by Sarvodaya Shramadana that day. The area between the Sri Maha Bodhi and Ruwanweli Seya was for the first time (in recent times) cleared by our shramadana workers that day. In the meantime with police assistance, Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne demolished all the brothels and kasippu (illicit liquor) dens and purified the area of a different form of a pollution rampant hitherto.

At the massive meeting held at the conclusion of the shramadana, the Anuradhapura Resolution (Anuradhapura Adish-tanaya) written by me was read out under the shade of the Sri Maha Bodhi and duly confirmed.

The Resolution

“We Sarvodaya workers strive for generating a society based on truth, non-violence and selflessness and rid of any harmful activity on humans that finally ensures the ultimate objective of formulating an environment in which each human could ascend to his or her optimum level. The welfare of everyone is our long term objective and to guarantee this as a first step we began the Shramadana Movement. During the last two years we collaborated with varied organizations in the country as schools, establishments and miscellaneous organizations on our Shramadana work. We admit that our work has not encompassed the whole island, which factor we hope to overcome by spear-heading a movement to spread Sarvodaya Shramadana tentacles



Photo 235:
Anuradhapura Central
College, where the campers
lodged

all over the island. In this venture we again embark on a project of giving a clear idea of our aligned movements of Sampattidana, Bhoodan, Gramdan, Jeevadan and Shanthisena. We also wish to restructure and strengthen these movements.”

The International Shanthisena

“We endorse the decision arrived at the International Anti-War Triennial Conference held at Grandhigram in India on December 21st to 28th in the year 1960 to set up an International Shanthisena and shall give our fullest co-operation to it. In the meantime to ameliorate the internal friction in our own country we will establish a national Shanthisena.”



Photo 236:
Anuradhapura shramadana

Photo 237:
Young shramadana
workers



Educational Value

“Being of the firm belief that a selfless and self-disciplined young generation could be trained via the philosophy and principles of the Shramadana Movement, we wish to draw State attention to the need to bringing in this training to the mainstream of education.”

National Youth Movement

“While admitting the fact that the envisaged National Youth Service Scheme would play an integral part in the developmental process in the country we wish to donate our experiences to this body. We wish to draw the special attention of the State to two factors here i.e.

1. That service should be voluntarily given.
2. That the discipline of this service should be formulated according to non-violent self-discipline. Further, this movement should be a cornerstone in the progress of the country.”

Nalanda Satyagraha – Fighting Evil

Begin any good creative work. Who will emerge as foes? Not any phenomena within that process but humans outside the movement eaten by jealousy. But retaliation generates weakness. So I have been always of the belief that the best response to evil actions is to have pity on the wrong-doers and fight the wrong deeds only.

Our aims could be very pure and sublime. But the mechanisms we employ to concretise these aims should in themselves be sublime. We should focus on truth, non-violence, and selflessness as the cornerstones of the principles we follow.

The records pertaining to the events that followed I handed over to Mr. Gunadasa Liyanage for his publication "Under the Breadfruit Tree." Here what I had written in the first person has been transferred by him to the third person only. Hence the details regarding the Nalanda Satyagraha, the attempt on my life and the events leading to alienation by the Government ending with suspension of my duties will not be dealt in detail. Anybody interested in them can read about them in that book.

By the end of 1961 I had been successful in getting all our members into an undisputed acceptance of the Sarvodaya philosophy, discipline and processes under our programme. There was no possibility for those who joined it with temporary or personal motives to stay on. Hence, except in one instance four decades ago we concurred in our decisions as one body.

Imitating the Sarvodaya Movement, various other organizations mushroomed in the subsequent years but were subject to a quick death. The Nalanda Social Services League in the meantime

continued as a brother organization of Sarvodaya. After Mr. Karunananda's transfer almost every facet of the school had collapsed. The discipline of teachers and students, teaching and extra curricular activities had all weakened, a state which nobody but those who benefited from this state condoned. The degeneration inflamed certain senior students. Many requests were made to save Nalanda College from utter ruin and letters appeared in newspapers carrying the same message. The new school head, Mr. K.M.W Kuruppu did not have the stamina to face up to the situation while those students who had imbibed the Sarvodaya ideology came to the forefront in saving Nalanda College from utter ruin.

It was at this time that Nalanda College students organized a meeting at Borella YMBA to commemorate the birthday of Acharya Vinoba Bhave. I was invited to deliver the keynote address under the theme "Satyagraha."

To a full audience I explained the meaning of Satyagraha or Satya Agrahaya which means 'holding fast to the truth.' What satyagraha actually meant, I said, was fighting in a non-violent and disciplined way against an injustice or an *adharma* while being based on an anchor of truth.

I went on to list six characteristics of Satyagraha:

1. Not to violate Truth or Ahimsa at any stage or for any reason.
2. To attempt to resolve the issue peacefully before becoming militant.
3. To come to a realization according to dictates of heart that the Satyagraha party is completely righteous in the matter at hand and that the said party is subject to a great injustice.
4. To be always against the wrong but not against the wrongdoer who should not be abused by word or thought or molested physically.
5. While indulging in this campaign, to act in such a manner that the antagonist and public opinion would always have an attitude of awe mixed with respect to the Satyagraha party.

6. To ultimately convince the offending party that they have done a wrong.

The Vinoba Jayanthi Felicitation was held on September 11, 1962. On the 12th as I arrived at the college I saw posters held high by students of the senior classes that displayed messages such as: "Hold inquiries into the situation at Nalanda," "Save Nalanda from ruin." School had not yet begun. The principal, following some wrong instructions had the gates closed at 7.50 am. thus preventing a set of students who were completely harmless from coming in. I advised the principal to get the students holding the posters to leave them there and make them go and open the gates for the other students to come in. But he did not heed me. Finally the students who were outside jumped over the gates and began a Satyagraha on the green. The students in the middle and lower grades were instructed by senior students to proceed to classrooms.

Meanwhile some old pupils of Nalanda studying in a private tutoring close by came and began to physically assault the Satyagraha group who did not retaliate but went on chanting "May all our attackers be well!" Mr. Victor Silva now came to the forefront, telephoned the police who came and put out the external group. The student leaders, Kulatunga Uluwita, Ananda Weerasekera and Sunil Wickremetunga, improvised as teachers and classes went on and school closed as usual with the routine ritual of the recitation of the stanzas:

Yovada thampava romanu jesu
Shakya muni bhagava gatha kichcho
Paragatho bala viriya samangi
Thansuga than saranaththa mupemi

Raga viraga maneja ma soka
Dhamma masankatha mappati kulan
Madura miman pagunan suvi bhattan
Dhamma miman saranaththa mupemi

Yathacha dinna mahappala mahu
Chathusu suchisu purisa yugesu
Attacha puggala dhamma dasathe
Sanghamiman saranaththa mupemi

The parents served food to the children seated on the green. The next day, the same pattern of events took place while the Nalanda Satyagraha began to be covered by newspapers. Of special note were the letters published by Mr. D.B. Dhanapala in the Davasa newspaper that defended and lauded the students' course of action.

About two weeks earlier, the teachers' conduct at Nalanda College had been probed by investigators from the Education Ministry and no blemishes in their conduct had been identified. When the Satyagraha was going on, Dr. Ananda Guruge, the Senior Assistant Secretary of the Ministry of Education, visited the school and requested me to ask the students to go into their class rooms. I wanted him to make a note of his request in the log book which he refused.

The Secretary of the Ministry of Education was displeased with me at this time over an incident that took place in Pambe Shramadana camp held in Kalutara district. He came to the camp suddenly and wished to make a speech. I declined his wish and giving him a mamoty (agricultural equipment), told him to exert himself physically and join in the work. Soon we learned, in a letter signed by the Director, Mr. S.F.De Silva, that Mr. D.S. Senanayake and I had been suspended from our jobs. On the third night of Satyagraha, we received a telegram informing us that the two of us were suspended and our entry onto Nalanda premises was forbidden.

Immediately after this, the Satyagraha was brought to an end by student leaders. I also ordered them to do so. Carrying the telegram and an express letter with the same message, I entered Mr. S.F.De Silva's room. I showed him the letters he had sent to me earlier praising the work I was doing and I asked him what made him now send such an order.

"I know that you are innocent," he said "But I had to follow the Secretary's orders."

"Sir, I am a poor teacher yet a principled one. And that I will show you." I said and went to meet the Secretary. The other officers were petrified. I told him that in stopping my job he cannot stop my service and that an immediate inquiry should be held but

that during the inquiry period my salary should be paid. Otherwise, I threatened that I would come over to his house with my family as I was unable to fend for my family. He did not speak a word and I went out of the room.

That night, I underwent the most alarming experience of my life. I learned from a student that, that night a contract had been given to one Dharmadasa alias Choppe, a ringleader of the underworld of Maradana, to murder me. That very night I went with Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe to meet Choppe and explained matters to him. It was a thrilling incident of which Gunadasa Liyanage has given a graphic account in his book. So I will only mention here that this person who had gained notoriety as a diehard criminal seemed to respect justice more than the bigwigs in the Education Ministry. We convinced him of the righteousness of our actions and explained that I never sought revenge from anybody and only extended my compassion to them.

The inquiry went on for 3 months at the end of which Mr. D.G. Kulatunga, then the most senior officer at the Ministry of Education, exonerated the two of us, Mr. Senanayake and me, of all charges. Our salary had not been unpaid nor suspended. Hence I could devote my time allotted for teaching to explain the concepts of Sarvodaya Shramadana to school children all over the island. Mr. W.M.A. Warnasuriya, Galle Director of Education at that time introduced me as an interdicted teacher yet one whose services would be invested in the welfare of all teachers and pupils. He attended every meeting that I held and gave me optimum encouragement. There were few such straight forward educators as him at this time.

During the period of our suspension in which Nalanda premises were taboo to us, Ven. Kalukondayawe Pagnasekera Mahanayake Thero, the Principal of Vidyodaya Pirivena in Maligakande, made all arrangements in his temple for us to con-



Photo 238:
Mr. W.M.A. Warnasuriya

duct the afternoon classes that were deprived to the school children at Nalanda College.

Though exonerated of all charges, we were still not allowed to enter school. It was only after a team comprising De Peter Silva of All-Ceylon Teachers Union, Mr. L.H. Mettananda, a great mentor of Buddhism and leaders like L. Mettananda, L. Ariyawansa, and T.U. De Silva went as a delegation to meet Hon. Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo

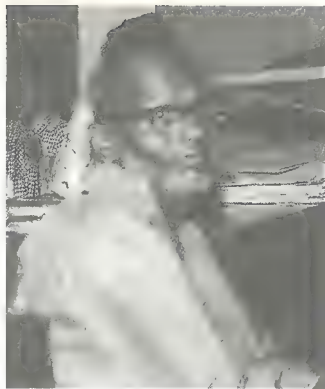


Photo 239:
Ven. Hissalle Gnanawimala
Thero

Bandaranaike and explained matters, that Mr. D.S. Senanayake and I were allowed back at the school.

The day that Dharmasena Senanayake and I again assumed duties, an unforgettable incident took place at the morning assembly. At that time, Ven. Panditha Hissalle Gnanawimala Thero, head of Nalandaramaya, worked voluntarily on Nalanda College staff together with Ven. Kotmale Amaravamsa Thero .

In his speech that day Ven. Panditha said this:

"I had a wrong idea of Mr. Ariyaratne that made me join the deputations that were sent to the prime minister to have him dismissed. Now I know that I was misguided. Though conscious of my animosity, he never reciprocated in the same way and he always treated me with respect. If I was not in robes I would have asked his forgiveness in a more open way. From today I enlist myself as a follower of his Sarvodaya Movement and ask all of you too to follow him and make our Island a Dhammadvipa."

Everybody was surprised by what he said and praised him. As I worshiped him, his tears fell on my head. This great Buddhaputra, having joined the Executive Council of our Movement, later wandered about in our villages, becoming an indefatigable Sarvodaya worker.

One day I got a call telling me that a village group, after visiting Sarvodaya Headquarters, met with an accident on their return journey. All of them were admitted to the Colombo General

Hospital. I immediately telephoned Ven. Gnanawimala and requested him to visit them and do whatever possible. At this time I did not know that the venerable had just returned from the hospital himself after taking treatment for several days for a heart treatment. In spite of that, he had gone to the hospital and attended to everything. Maybe because of the strain, he had fallen ill again and was admitted to the hospital where he passed away. His cremation rites were elaborately performed by us. Over five thousand of us participated in the funeral procession from Nalanda to the Kanatte General Cemetery.

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(இலங்கைத் தலைநகரில் உள்ள அனைத்து
 பிரதேசங்களிலும் காலித கையாடல் செய்து
 மீது என விளக்கப்படும்.)

(Please quote this number in your reply and add
 res cover to the Director of Education, Colombo 2)

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 வித் தியா பகுதி
 EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

කොළඹ 2
 கொழும்பு 2
 Colombo 2

1962 පැපුවා නිවර්තන ප්‍රදේශය

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3 වැනි පෙදේසි පරීක්ෂණය 1962. 9. 15 දිනට දරණ ලිපියෙහි

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1962/9.

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My No. NSHA 32
 Education Department,
 Colombo 2, 3rd October 1962.

Mr. A.T.Ariyaratne,
 493, Second Division,
 Maradana.
 Asst. Tr., C/Malanda College.
 Colombo.

The following telegram sent to you today is hereby
 confirmed:
 " YOU ARE REINSTATED WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT (STOP) LETTER
 FOLLOWS - EDUCATION NS"

Please report the date of assumption through the
 Principal to me and to the Asst. Director of Education, Western
 Region (North), Colombo 3.

(Signature)

Director of Education

- Copies to:
 1. Principal, C/Malanda College, Colombo.
 2. A.D., W.R.(N)
 3. A.D., W.R.(N) -Sal.Br.
 4. A.D./TRB

- “සමග්‍රහිත”
1988, ඩිසිම්බර් මාසය
පිටපත, පොතේ-10.
- විශාල වරින් පළවේ.
- කිසිම දේශපාලන පක්ෂයකට
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ତେଜସ୍ବିତ

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සිය අභි-සාන විරෝධය පිහිටන
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“ආරියරත්න” මහාසංඝරාජාණික
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ජයගෙව්වා!” “සි” අර්ථනාමයෙන්, අර
මෙන් අපි 6 පසුව.

සමාජයේ ගතය ගැන අපි දැනිමු.
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හැමිමට තැන් කරද්දී, බෙරු ප්‍රධාන ගෙන' යද්දී, ශිෂ්‍යයින් විදාලයෙන් අත්කිවීමට තැන් කරද්දී, ආවිශරස්ත ගුහතා ශිෂ්‍යයින්ගේ සටනට සහ- ගෝගය දෙන්නට ඇත.

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ദ്രാവിഡ

- සමාගම
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The First Escalator in Sri Lanka

Newspapers gave wide publicity to the Nalanda Satyagraha and due to this, and official wrath, my name had been dragged into it, carrying further news about my interdiction along with Mr. Senanayake's. Mr. D.B. Dhanapala, Chief Editor of the Davasa group of newspapers especially focused on the injustice meted to me, gaining public sympathy for me. In the infant stage of Sarvodaya, the Sinhala, English and Tamil newspapers of the Davasa and Times groups, the Navayugaya and several small newspapers and magazines gave us a lot of coverage and support. The Lake House newspapers followed suit. I cannot remember the names of all those who blazed publicity for us but I must mention very gratefully here the names of Messrs D.B. Dhanapala, Reggie Michael,



Photo 240:
Mr. D.B.Dhanapala



Photo 241:
Mr. Carlton Samarajeeva

Joe Sigera, Premil Ratnayake, Henry Maldeniya, Somaweera Senanayake, Revd. Fr. Ernest Poruthota, Nimal Prematileka, Rohana Gamage, Cyril A. Seelawimala and Piyal Wickremesinghe.

The Revd. Fr. Poruthota had contributed a beautiful article to Rasavahini analysing Sarvodaya in the context of Christian ethics. It was Mr. Carlton Samarajeeva, was way back that first reproduced a speech of mine in a foreign magazine called "Asian Student."

Later he became editor of our *Dana* magazine.

If I have omitted to mention any other writers who helped us in the course of this work, I will try to rectify the omission. That there were many of the elite class who, though they had no direct contact with me yet, had empathy with our movement. This was testified to by the phone calls and letters received from them. One such incident is carved in my memory.



Photo 242:
Mr. Justin Kotelawala

One day someone came running into my house and informed me that Mr. Justin Kotelawala, brother of Sir John Kotelawala, had alighted from a chauffeur driven car, halted outside New City Stores and was walking towards my house along the narrow lane. I walked out to receive him. He was decked out in full European costume. Though I had not met him before, after shaking hands with me, he sat in my parlour and said,

"Mr. Ariyaratne, I have read a lot about you in the newspapers and learnt about the valuable service you have rendered to our country. I also came to know that you are interdicted. Can I help you?"

"Sir, your coming here alone is enough. The words uttered by you now are enough to bolster me. I am a fighter all set to war with injustice but I fight in a non-violent and creative way.

I thank you immensely!"

"Carry on your battle. I will pay you the salary they may suspend. Continue with your social service."

"Thank you Sir, I asked the Education Ministry not to stop my salary even if I am interdicted as I am a poor teacher who has to support a wife, two children and my parental family, too. I do not think they have the moral strength to stop my salary. In case they do, I will certainly come to you."

After having chatted with me further, he invited me to visit his new business enterprise. I dressed and got into his massive car. A group had already gathered at the junction. I felt rather embar-



Photo 243:
Deshamanya
Mr. Lalith Kotelawala

rassed to sit in such a car but went away with him smiling at the crowd.

He stopped the car before Ceylinco House, about which he gave me a graphic account. Calling me Ari now that he had established a close friendship with me, he showed me a flight of steps that were moving up and down by electricity.

"Ari, this is Sri Lanka's first escalator. Our people should see these and get exposed to the modern technology of the world. Only then will the fervour to develop be ingrained in them."

I laughed and told him. "Sir, do not get angry at what I say. I like buildings to be put up minus such flights so that people can climb up on foot. Please remember that our people still climb Sri Pada mountain that is 8296 feet high, but I appreciate the attempt you have made to expose to our people to innovations like this."

Now we were on the next floor. Having laughed at what I said, he took me into all the divisions of Ceylinco House. I was treated to tea, too, and later driven home in his car. Before I left he patted me and said,

"Remember that Ceylinco and I are there behind you. Carry on your good work."

As I got out of the car driven by the white uniformed chauffeur before New City Stores, Mr. George Chandrasoma, the eldest son of Mr. P. E. Perera, Proprietor of New City Stores, came out smiling. I had to narrate everything to him.

From that day on, I visited Mr. Kotelawala at his Ward Place residence several times and discussed many issues. Through these visits, I developed a friendship with Deshamanya Mr. Lalith Kotelawala, his son, and the present Chairman of Ceylinco.

Shramadana for Self-Development

Imitations of the Sarvodaya Movement soon began to appear. One of these was a programme established by the National Service Unit of the Land Development Department and was overseen by Mr. Ariyananda Abeysekera and Dr. Lakshman de Silva. The Work Experience Programme of the Education Department was another.

Mr. Chandra Fonseka was an efficient and accessible civil servant with whom I became very friendly. Between the years 1961 and 1965, he made a concerted attempt to coordinate all voluntary service organizations and align them with the developmental work under his purview. He once made available a part of a departmental building at Alston Place for us to have as an office.

Dr. Gamini Wijewardena had been put in charge of the Work Experience Programme of the Education Ministry. Several times he came to meet me to seek help and even get me assigned to his unit, which I refused. However, I was ready to grant any help from the outside to him.

On his request, I organized a three day camp at Dehiwala Central College to train teachers and pupils in shramadana. About 500 students gathered to prepare a playground for the college. I told Dr. Wijewardena that I would organize the camp in a particular way which would include meditation, a rendering of the national anthem and songs. Indigenous customs would be followed and also a high



Photo 244:
Mr. Chandra Fonseka

discipline maintained. A leaflet indicating the programme was distributed to each student. Dr. Wijewardena had offered to look after all the food and drinks necessary.

We had arranged to hoist the national flag, the Sarvodaya flag and the school flag at 7.55 am, when the camp would commence. I was told by Dr. Wijewardena that he had invited the MP, Mr. Colvin R. De Silva, and Minister of Education, Hon. Badi-ud-din Mohammed, as chief guests. I told him that if they were more than 5 minutes late, we would just go ahead and start.

As expected, the chief guests arrived late, and the student leaders were invited to hoist the flags. The most elderly teacher was to be the first to turn the soil. Then the camp began in earnest. An hour later, Dr. Wijewardena, the MP, the Hon. Minister and the Director of Education came. Using the implements we gave them, they worked in the camp for awhile and went away after a short time.

No food or drinks had been provided. So I asked Mr. Albert Edirisinghe and Mrs. Somie Meegama to make donations and with the help of my cousin, Arnolis Aiya of Arunadisi Hotel, we provided the meals. The "family gathering" was also held and at 5.00 pm we dispersed. That was the first and last shramadana camp that the Education Ministry asked me to organize.

After about a week, the Education Ministry conducted a Seminar on Work Experience at Giragama Teachers College for about 1000 teachers. Dr. Gamini Wijewardena and Mr. E.H. De Alwis made the preliminary speeches with little effect on the audience. I was the next speaker. What is education? What is the role of the teacher? How can shramadana become an effective tool in education? Those were the issues I discussed. The spontaneous response of all the teachers surprised even Mr. E.H. De Alwis. At the end of the speech, to my question whether teachers would join the Movement, there was a 100% show of hands. The praise I



Photo 245:
Mr. Albert Edirisinghe

got was overwhelming. Mr. Carlton Samarajeewa, who was in the audience wrote a brilliant piece in a foreign newspaper about it and sent me a copy.

The main result of this meeting was my encounter with Mr. William Kandage, who later became a General Secretary of Sarvodaya Shramadana International and served the Movement for many years. Mr. A.K. Wickremesinghe of Badulla also joined us as a result of that meeting.

Mr. Kandage later visited my house, armed with a grand plan of holding a network of camps in the Kegalle district. As a consequence many camps like those of Natiyapana, Aranayaka, Galbokka, Rahala and Hakurugammana were held where about 1000-6000 people participated. The massive network of roads spanning this area along which huge buses ply today was spawned out of this shramadana campaign in Kegalle at that time.

Excerpts reproduced below from Mr. Kandage's own report on this campaign reveal the hardships experienced in the venture.

Mr. Kandage, one of several school heads who came from all parts of the island to the Giragama GTC Conference held on April 5, 1961, had written, following his first encounter with me:



Photo 247:
Mr. K. Wijesekera



Photo 246:
Mr. William Kandage

"At about 3.00 pm a mini-sized youth of about 26 years, dressed in national costume got onto the stage and began his speech by mentioning that a mere viewing of the impoverished god, Daridra Narayana, is in itself a blessing of the gods. Then he went on to elaborate on the South African Satyagraha Movement of Mahatma Gandhi, the emergence of Sarvodaya philosophy and its role in the Indian freedom movement. Next he described the defects in our education system highlighting how Gandhi's

Wardha Education System could inspire ours. For three hours his speech cascaded like a waterfall. At 6.00 pm it was over. Having been in the grips of fascination I walked up to the speaker, held both his hands and thanked him for the speech. I also voiced my desire to join the Jeevadan movement he spoke of and dedicate my whole life to it. I think that meeting was a tryst with destiny that had such a bearing on my life and social work.

Then I went on to discuss with him the possibility of crafting an out of class education system and a just society rid of the pollution of party politics. By this time a design for an educational and community service shramadana camp at Kegalle district where I work had already been drawn in my mind. I expressed my ambition to Mr. Ariyaratne, who invited me to visit him on Saturday morning at his Maradana house.

Accordingly, I went there with a rough plan of the envisioned camp but Mr. Ariyaratne elaborated on it and scheduled the camp for the first week of the oncoming August vacation.

Although I got an invitation to stay for lunch, having seen the small pot of rice on the fire and sensing that those in the house would starve if I accepted the invitation, I bought a lunch packet at Sandagiri Hotel and ate it in the room of Mr. Ariyaratne's bap-pochchi, Mr. A.T.C Jinadasa, and went home."

The next Monday morning Mr. Kandage had alerted the teachers and students about the oncoming camp and then sensitized the community about it. Every following weekend, he used to come and discuss details concerning the programme.

Overcoming Obstacles

Nalanda College at this time was a government-assisted school under the purview of the Buddhist Theosophical Society. Hence, its head and staff were without constraints, a privilege denied to Mr. William Kandage, who was a government servant.



Photo 248:
Mr. A.K. Wickremesinghe

So, to go ahead unencumbered with his shramadana work, Mr. Kandage convened the Parent Teachers Association, put the relevant motion through and got himself empowered to conduct the programme. Classes called Adult Education classes were to be the working machinery. Then he went around the area gathering supporters.

He also set the wheel in motion to get the collaboration of the Parent-Teacher Associations of the schools of Udugama-Pattampitiya, Kempitiya, Halagiriya, Kadigamuwa, Henepola, Maliyadda and Baddewela. Further he enlisted the support of the piloting officers of organizations in the area as Rural Development Societies, Sports Clubs, women's organizations, and the help of rural level co-ordinators such as village heads and health instructors. All this work was culminated by a discussion with Mr. Asoka Dharmakeerthi, then Director of Education, Kegalle, from whom he had gotten written permission to address schools in the area in the morning assembly on the envisaged shramadana project. He manoeuvred to enlist the participation of the school heads, a teacher and at least 10 students from each school at the shramadana. The equipment necessary - mammoties (agricultural equipment to dig the soil) plus basic food stuff such as tea, sugar, and bananas - were also to be procured through community donations.

The problem of expenses for correspondence was overcome by using State envelopes carrying the seal of Rambukkana and Mawanella MPs. and hundreds of letters were sent free. The support of the Mawanella Divisional Revenue Officer, Mr. Bandaranayaka, is worth mentioning. Mr. Kandage met Mr. Guy Amirthalingam, Government Agent of Kegalle district and the foremost State officer in the area, and via him was assured the support of all State organizations. Then he got endorsements for the project from officers such as the District Land Development Officer, Assistant Agriculture Officer, Assistant Health Officer (Mr. Vivekanandaraja), Asst. Commissioner of Agriculture, and the Police Superintendent (Mr. Ananda Seneviratne). The Mawanella District Revenue Officer made all the arrangements to allocate to the shramadana camp essential food such as rice, sugar and dhal. The Ceylon Transport Board volunteered to arrange special bus services.

Publicity Meeting – June 18, 1961

At Pannampitiya in 1958, an incident had occurred. A Buddhist Perahera (procession) had wended its way before a mosque and the Muslims, regarding this as a disturbance to their rituals, had clashed with the Buddhists, bringing in Police intervention. In the melee a Buddhist had died and in retaliation a Muslim school and Muslim boutiques were destroyed.

Now the glow of Sarvodaya illuminated the area. In this glow, at a meeting in one of the surviving buildings of the destroyed school, the Sarvodaya philosophy and its vision to improve rural conditions in the area were expounded. Mr. M.A. Tillekeratne and I spoke at this meeting. Participants at the meeting included: Rambukkana Member of Parliament and Deputy Minister Mr. Asoka Karunaratne, Mawanella Member of Parliament and Deputy Minister of Trade Mr. P.R. Ratnayake, a representative of the Kegalle Government Agent, officers of the Education Department, Rambukkana Superintendent of Police Mr Francis Ileperuma and other representatives of the Police, the Commissioner of Agriculture and other sub-officers of Ceylon Transport Board, headmen, public health inspectors, delegates from societies such as the Mahila Samithi and Rural Development societies, all school heads of the area, denizens of the villages of Pattampitiya, Kadigamuwa, Natiyapana, Kempitiya, Udugama, Henepola, Maliyadde, Yatiwaldeniya, Halagiriya, Kiriwandeniya, Muwapitiya and Makehelwala, and Muslims and Tamils from the estates of Hathbewa and Kempitiya.

Daily Programme in a Camp

The first things done in a camp are that people wake up at 4.30 am, have a cup of tea, perform the morning ablutions and clean the immediate environment. Then the latrines are washed. Later come the drill exercises. After breakfast, putting on a garb fitting for work, everybody takes part in the family gathering under the *kodi gaha* (flag post). Then the crowd forms into groups of 10 that are comprised of students, teachers and community members. Taking equipment along with them, promising to return them, they wend their way towards the camp. They sing songs on the way,

expressing sentiments such as "Long live shramadana! May our small villages prosper! May we get courage from the Mother of Lanka," emotional songs that make onlookers also join with the shramadana volunteers. Sign posts inform people of the sites where each group has to work. The rural folk, after gazing in wonder at the town folk who have come to construct roads for them, naturally join in. Even small children carry soil away in arecanut sheaves with elderly women also working. In the background can be heard songs exhorting all little ones to wake up and be like blooming flowers. This adds to the momentum of work.

Groups whose job is to supply water quench the thirst of the workers. The first aid workers carry first aid supplies about. Children from the urban area cry out as leeches cling onto them. At 10 in the morning, after having laid aside the equipment, the morning breakfast of buns and bananas is taken. Work starts again at 10.15am. At 12.30 pm., the work concludes when a bell or a sound from the loud speaker gives the signal to stop; equipment is laid aside and everybody, after washing himself or herself, gets ready for lunch. The lunch is followed by a banana. An elder might relax and chew betel.

Now begins the afternoon family gathering under the leadership of a teacher or an elder. Then a two-minute meditation session follows. An entertainment session begins with an elder reciting a

Photo 249:
Constructing
roads





Photo 250: Digging wells

folk song or narrating a story of olden days, entertaining the audience. These afternoon family gatherings take place in all the villages. At 2.00 pm again, shramadana work resumes. Then comes afternoon tea at 3.00 pm and later evening tea with biscuits and bananas. The Tea Propaganda Board provides the tea. Villagers are generous with their king coconuts and kurumba (young coconut). The evening work session ends at 5.00 after which everyone takes a bath. As it is forbidden to bathe in running waterways, they bathe at wells and pipes and fountains, and again have a cup of tea. Then newspapers are read. Discourses follow with the villagers until about 7.30 pm. where much is revealed about their conditions. Meanwhile group leaders design the next day's programme based on the previous day's experiences. After dinner the night family gathering begins. Around a campfire everybody enjoys the evening as they participate in many cultural activities.

From Village to Village and From House to House

The Sarvodaya health education officer's visits to houses had as its chief aim the inculcation of good health habits in rural women. These officers would walk into the people's kitchens directly. Then they gave instructions where to leave the pot of



Photo 251: Home gardening

water and how to cover it well, where to place the other pots and pans, knives, winnows, reed bags and what not. Then advice was given on how to store foodstuff such as chillies, onions and spices, how to place them in labelled tins for easy access, how to wash the grinding stone after the work was over, how to maintain the "*lunu polkatuwa*," the coconut shell receptacle of salt and how to preserve vegetables.

Once it had been a custom in the villages to take a handful of rice and everything else they were cooking and place it in a separate pot. This rice was known as *Miti Haal* (handful of rice) and it always came in handy in an emergency. This habit was revived by Sarvodaya.

Preserving Food

Kos ata or jak seeds were traditionally preserved as *veli kos ata*. The art of preserving them was revived and a *veli kos eta mulla* organized (jak seeds are covered with sand for dehydration in the corner of the hut). Women were also taught how to dry breadfruit chips when breadfruit was in season and how to produce *lunu dehi* (lemon fruit preserved in



Photo 252:
Cottage crafts

salt) and dried billing (a kind of fruit used to make pickle) while the workers themselves learned from the housewives the art of making "*Koholla meliyam*" (the sticky substance emanating from jak branches).

How to Keep an Orderly House

Instructions were also given as to how to put everything in order in an accessible place especially for the use of children. There were programmes in child health, too. The women were also encouraged to grow things in their own gardens for consumption, and also flowers. How to prepare a balanced diet was often discussed. For planting purposes, each house was given a jak plant that would bear fruits in 18 months, a guava plant and a banana plant.



Photo 253:
Repairing tanks and irrigation works

Building Latrines

The Director of Health Services at Kegalle had made available money for the construction of 100 latrines in the village. The Public Health Inspector used to go from house to house and advise people on all the meticulous details regarding this construction work, including the placing of the pit and a week's work that ensued. The Land Development Department built 15 latrines, 5 wells for bathing and 5 wells for agricultural purposes, and the District Revenue Officer built 5 wells. The digging of a bathing well was inaugurated by me at a school, by removing the first layer of the soil.

All this work was not only beneficial to the average villager but highly educational for young females, especially the advisory discussions on how to bathe an infant, the provision of food, how to keep one's household clean and orderly, the inculcation of rural habits, hospitality, simplicity, and the revival of making indigenous

Sinhala food such as *roti* (round bread) and *pusnambu*. All of these proved highly educational. Most of this information was given at the *Pavul Hamuwa* (family gatherings).

Afternoon Family Gathering

In the afternoon we had our lunch seated on a fallen coconut trunk. There was a special family gathering. The Village Headman tearfully made a speech.

"I had been of the conviction that this shramadana of mostly school children would be a mere farce. But when I observe the tremendous amount of work done so far I feel ashamed of my earlier thought. Hence I have decided to provide the breakfast and lunch of the Kadigamuwa camp free. I will also give my own land for the extension of this road."

He endorsed what he said by a written document. After this and one more shramadana we went on to the village of Udugama. The construction of the village road and the shramadana involved in the Rambukkana road were both carried out very successfully. People took part in the labour involved in stretching the road to the railway. Then we went onto Halagiriya camp where the villagers were actively involved.



Photo 254:

Dr. (Mrs) Lakshman De Silva at Akarella camp with village children

Into a Pit

Night was advancing. We were walking towards Natiyapana along a foot path. Mr. Kandage led. I followed and Mr. D. Arampatta, then Principal of Kumara Vidyalyaya (school) in Kotahena, came after me. We were busy discussing an anecdote about this area when Mr. Arampatta's voice suddenly stopped. I shouted back, asking what had happened to him. He had totally disappeared. We called out to him, and from a pit into which he had slipped and fallen came his voice. He was uninjured except for a few bruises and soiled clothes. Having washed off the mud in a stream close by and tending to the cuts, we went on to the camp for an overnight stay and decided to go on to the Halagiriya-Kirivandeniya camp on the next day.

Organization

After a publicity meeting the response of the people in the area was immense. More arrived from Colombo and all their needs had to be catered to.

Provision of Food

Bed tea, breakfast, ten o'clock tea, lunch, afternoon tea, evening tea and dinner – all these had to be provided. It was taboo to collect money. Only food contributions were accepted.

Youths carrying publicity posters on their backs and fronts paraded through the area ringing bells and they were very instrumental in procuring food contributions. Entertainment was provided by villagers with Udarata dancing, folk songs, and Seepada and raban (drum) playing at times when they were not working. The shramadana leaders would recount the day's work done and give the oncoming agenda. At a family gathering, a young participant would get up and ask pardon for some mistake he or she had made. The family gathering would close with everybody in high spirits. After the villagers left, we would spread mats in a school building or a dharma sala (hall) and go to sleep. Silence would reign. Once Mr. Kandage and I were discussing something in the night when a youth about to sleep protested that our talk was disturbing his sleep (avihimsa), and we accepted this and became silent.

Surveying Camps

The next day after work had begun, Messrs Arampatta and Kandage and I set out to survey the camps. From Thumpahana camp to Maliyadda camp was a distance of 11 miles. Kempitakande camps and Baddeweela camps were located in between. We started trudging on foot. Across the hills we went to Kempitakande. On the way we met a crowd cutting a road through a rubber estate and a group constructing latrines. We also passed the dam site undertaken by the Agriculture Department and after conversing with the Tamil people living in the area, we entered Kempitiya camp. After having tea there we came to Baddewela Maha Vidyalaya through a Muslim village. Here people who had finished the morning shramadana work had congregated for lunch. We also had our lunch there followed by the noon family gathering.



Photo: 255
Prof. Dharmasena Arampatta

Mr. Arampatta and I made two speeches, followed by a cultural pageant of school children. After the family gathering we went over to Maliyadde camp, 2 miles in a vehicle and 2 miles on foot. We reached there by 3.30 pm, had tea. I addressed the participants and took part in the shramadana work there until 4.30 pm. We came 2 miles back on foot, got into a vehicle and came to Pattampitiya office.

A Bhoodan (Donation of Land)

Deciding to visit other camps the next day because night had advanced, we stayed there and proceeded to Baddewela camp in the morning. Certain things of note happened here such as the donation ten square feet of land by an old woman. This land had a fruit-laden jak fruit tree but she said that as the road benefited the village and was much more valuable than the jak tree, she had no regrets at all about parting with it. She further said that before this road was built a sick person in the hamlets of Pitawala or Uduwela had to be carried on a chair to hospital and that the patient usually ended up even

sicker with the toils and travails on the way. We showed our gratitude to her by planting ten jak plants, a mango plant and a guava plant on her land.

Those living in the urban area assured us that a supply of sugar, tea, bread, buns, biscuits and bananas that would be sufficient for the whole camp would be donated by them. Youths went to each and every house and gave instructions to the villagers to prepare with one measure of rice - five packets, 4 large and 1 small. So diners were assured with vegetarian meal packets.

Within those two weeks the Mawanella District Revenue Officer extended his influence and issued milchard (steamed rice) rice, dhal, onions, chillies, flour and sugar to the Co-operatives in the area as well as to private merchants. So the food problem was solved. But a certain elitist person in the area had announced that no help would be given by him and had even threatened the volunteer workers. This behaviour was reported to Mr. Kandage by a relative of his. As this sort of reaction could infect others, Mr. Kandage went to meet him at his house 8 in the night.

In a drunken state, he had bragged about himself and steadfastly refused support. Nothing could change him. Mr. Kandage, his patience tried, walked out and seeing the large heap of coconuts outside, said he would take some coconuts. "No," the man said, "not even half a nut would be given." Finally, when his inebriated state lessened, he promised ten pounds of sugar which he sent early the next morning to the school. That act bolstered the donating process.

Provision of Equipment

The Sarvodaya Society did not own a single mammoty at that time. Hence we had to depend on the community. So Superintendents of Estates met and from each of them we borrowed 50 mammoties and other necessities such as pans and baskets. School children and villagers were advised to bring their own equipment. Youngsters used *kitul* (palm tree) sheaths to take away the soil while smaller ones used arecanut sheaths. Elders tied coir to planks of wood to serve the same purpose.

Health Services

In the seven school premises that were the camp venues, temporary latrines were built. The Health Department provided disinfectants. The Land Development Department provided barrels to store water. Hot water was provided to all. Kurumba (young coconut) was available to everyone.

Supply of Tea

The Tea Propaganda Board distributed cups of tea at 11 places connected to the shramadana.

Cinema Shows

Every night the Government Film Unit screened a film-show in a chosen camp. The Film Unit of the Education Department screened films in some camps and the Film Unit of the Agriculture Department screened films in others.

Sports Activities

In the evenings, games like volley ball together with national games such as thachchi were played.

Library Facilities

In every camp, newspapers and magazines were made available for reading.

Local Anecdotes

Elders were encouraged to narrate stories about the history of the area to audiences in the camps.

Cultural Activities

Halgiriya, one of the villages where the shramadana took place, is the birthplace of the Art of Wannam. Under the leadership of Tikiribanda, a maestro in this dance form, cultural pageants were staged highlighting Wannam.

Education Activities

The school children's curriculum was adjusted accordingly at this time. For example, language classes were utilised to discuss activity in the camps.

The Launch of the Shramadana Camps

On August 5th, about 1000 people arrived at 3.00 pm. at Rambukkana railway station by a special train.

At the simple launching ceremony, the following were present, the then Deputy Minister of Justice and Rambukkana MP, Mr. Asoka Karunaratne, the Mawanella MP. Mr. P.R. Ratnayaka, the Buddhist monks of the area, Christian clergy, delegates of the Police Department, Mr. Asoka Dharmakeerthi, the Director of Education of Kegalle, Mr. Ileperuma, Mawanella SI, delegates from Health, Agriculture, Land Development departments, headmen and school heads. After a small ceremony tea was served to all. The Ceylon Transport Board buses catered the groups to the respective camp centres thus making the movement of humans and equipment very easy.

Central Office

A Muslim gentleman in the area opened his house, earlier given to a mosque, to be used as our central office. This house, being a massive one, made identification of the camp easy. Here 1000 jak, mango and guava plants were deposited.

Unifying for Work Having Transcended All Friction

In the aftermath of a malaria epidemic in the Kegalle area where malaria had wreaked havoc, the government had allowed villagers to take part in road building and thereby to earn an income. The Halagiriya-Kongahadeniya road and Welikanda road were built this way. To the left of the road was a rubber estate belonging to Mr. Wijesinghe of Kiriwandeniya. On the other side was the threshing field belonging to Dr. Ambagahamulahena, a local physician. An issue that had arisen between these two properties had remained unresolved for 28 years. We met both parties and finally coerced them into coming to a settlement. Finally, the road was not only repaired but these two, themselves, took part in the shramadana. On August 6, 1961 as the shramadana began in earnest, they had both cleared some rubber trees from their land, making feasible a road 20 feet wide.

Mr. P.A. Kiriwandeniya, who later worked in the Sarvodaya Development Education Unit at Meth Medura, was a student in the Advanced Level classes at this time. He joined the Sarvodaya movement by first helping in the cutting down of rubber trees on the land of his uncle, Mr. Wijesinghe, and treating the workers to kurumba. In two days, the road work was over. There was a place where the water used to flow across but there was no time to construct a culvert there. Instead, a strong bridge of Milla wood was constructed using the skillful labour of villagers. The road was declared open by Mr. Upali Wijeratne, who was then the Sub-Inspector of Mawanella, later the Police Superintendent, by driving his jeep along the new road.

Planting of Coconut Saplings and Home Gardening

Under the leadership of Mr. Ilangaratne (brother of Mr. T.B. Ilangaratne), head of the Magolla Agriculture Unit at Rambukkana, about a 100 students planted coconut saplings and plants of other genres.

Goodbye!

The student groups, having come to the end of the shramadana, were getting ready to go home after a spate of public meetings. That heralded a very emotional moment when elderly women held on to the children and cried that they had indeed given them a memorable time. A mother who distributed lozenges said that her love for the children was sweeter than the sweet of the lozenges. There was weeping and many tears shed, tears of sadness and joy.

The Farewell Meeting

At the end of the mini Sinhala Muslim War, the Muslim school's properties had been decimated except for one single table. That, too, was charred in some places. The chairperson of our farewell meeting, Mr. Guy Amirthanayagam, Government Agent of Kegalle, sat at this table. Others who attended the meeting such as Mr. Asoka Karunaratne, Member of Parliament for Mawanella electorate, Mr. Asoka Dharmakeerthi, the Village Headmen and the District Revenue Officer. sat on mats along with a thousand shra-

madana participants. The speech delivered by me was critical of the activities of the Rural Development Department. I must admit that this later proved to be rather an obstacle for Mr. Kandage getting any state support. The Director of Education made this report: "It was as if Vishva Karma, the Universal creator, was at work here. Roads, wells, never before in existence simply sprang up."

In the Aftermath of the Camp

The activities of the school children and others who came from external areas and helped in all the work, spawned a change of attitude in the minds of the villagers. Resolving to forget petty squabbles they decided to resuscitate the ancient social codes of co-operation. During weekends, they themselves began to complete the left over work. In the nights, with the aid of patromax lamps, they worked. Using money from the Agriculture Department, they finished constructing the dams. Cultural groups that sprang up in the Adult Centres were supplied with musical instruments.

In the Sinhala language exam of the General Certificate of Examination held in December of 1961, one of the essay topics that was prescribed was "A Shramadana Camp." I heard that many children selected this and scored high marks.

Aranayaka Rahala Camp

The decision to run a camp at Rahala in September was made after a discussion among the following people who took part in Natiyapana camp: the Aranayaka District Medical Officer, Mr. Athauda, Police Inspector, Mr. Ranatunga and School heads. It was accordingly decided to run two camps at Aranayaka on September 14th and on the following 3 days. At that time, only a foot path served as a road from Horewala in Aranayaka via Rahala to Salava, a historical shrine of olden days. The initial step was to construct a road fit for vehicle traffic from Horewala to Rahala West school. The second step was to construct a road from Aranayaka to Hakurugammana. It was also decided to run a health camp.

Rahala Camp

Pioneers in the staging of this camp were the District Medical Officer, the Superintendent of Police, Head of Rahala West School

and other senior school heads. One villager bore the expenses of the surveying necessary for the project. Villagers voluntarily offered tracts of land from their own properties to make the planned road building feasible. Though the Provincial Deputy Director of Education was invited as the chief guest, he declined the invitation. Mr. W.M.A. Warnasuriya, Deputy Director of Education at the Ministry, was invited. He promised to attend the function after returning from a foreign tour on the 13th.

On the evening of the 13th the camp got going. Work in earnest began on the 14th. The Rahala West School principal recorded an attendance of 1750. That the road was constructed right on the first day is testimony to the intense success of the event. At about 6 in the evening, the District Medical Officer, the Superintendent of Police and several others arrived at Rahala West School in a jeep, soaring the spirits of the villagers. The drains were cut the next day. The meeting that day was attended by late Mr. M.A. Tillekaratne, then Secretary of Sarvodaya, Director of Education Mr. W.M.A. Warnasuriya, Mr. P.R. Ratnayake, Member of Parliament of the area, and myself. After a bath we went on to receive the guests who drove along the road, arriving at the school where thousands had already congregated. Mr. Warnasuriya then got up on the stage and unexpectedly announced that no meeting or speeches were necessary, that the public had shown the highest discipline by way of this camp. He then invited Mr. Gunetilleka, the lecturer, to commence a ballet that he had produced to commemorate this camp. This was followed by a dance display of school children that was really an exhibition of the indigenous dance forms typical of the Kandyan areas and the Aranayake.

Terrain

During this time (March, 1961) people who lived in Hendala, both Buddhist and Christian, had launched a shramadana to cut a road along the canal to Palliyawatte. This was a shramadana which we undertook to organize. Mr. T. Jayasinghe, a teacher of Christian College in Kotte, and I were in charge of this camp. Anthony Fernando, a young man, handled the organizing. I attested to his marriage, too, in which Revd. Fr. Kuriyakose officiated. The wed-

Photo: 256
Mr. R. S. Udakumbura
and Vajira leading the
group



ding was held secretly, due to a caste issue. So even among the Catholics, this issue lurks, I learned from this event.

The camp at Korosduwa in Wadduwa was also held at that time. The catalyst for this camp was the acute necessity of a road highlighted by the tragedy of a man afflicted with chicken pox who drowned in a stream in a vain bid to reach home. Mr. Donald Wijesekera "malli," a Sarvodaya member, was put in charge of the camp.

The massive shramadana to build a road from Nikgaha to Gavaragiriya was begun in April, 1962. We camped at Fahiengala Temple in Yatgampitiya off Bulathsinhala. By this village Mr. Ronnie De Mel owned an estate named "Geekiyana Kande." Mr. De Mel joined me many times during this camp. He could not deliver speeches in Sinhala then, so in Geekiyana Estate I used to dictate the speech he would rehearse with me before the final public delivery. Eventually, he became a very eloquent Sinhala speaker. According to my diary, his first Sinhala public speech was made on April 21, 1962. The Ven. Pandit Wewala Dhammaransi Thero headed this camp.

In every district, we managed to assemble people's power and pave the way for self development via popular participation. Our aim was to direct the mass of humanity towards a goal of peace and prosperity through the realization of their own energy and unity by means of a rational process.

Father I Become, and a King in My Home

In June, 1961, there was a public Exposition of a Sacred Tooth Relic brought from China. On an invitation Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne, we organized a Sarvodaya Shramadana there.

On 12th morning, Neetha had begun her labour pains for her first child. Having gotten amma to look after her, I went out to organize the camp. When I returned, the pains had increased and I immediately took her to Castle Street Hospital. Amma stayed by her and I sat on the parapet wall – all tensed up.

On news of the child's arrival into this world, I rushed in and saw her tiny face for the first time. Maybe to commemorate her father's constant travelling with a salutary message for the country I named my daughter, Samya Charika. I rushed back to the House Under the Breadfruit Tree to give everyone the good news. Prof. S. H. P. Nanayakkara, the medical doctor who looked after the mother and child, never charged me any fee.

As I gazed at my child's face, a line from my 'bappochchi's' poetry seeped into me:

"Father I have become, a king in my home."



Photo 257: 9 year old Harsha Navaratne, my eldest sister's son, carrying Charika



Photo 258:
Neetha and Charika
greeting Weere



Photo 259:
Well-wishers at Malli's
departure to England
(from l to r) bappochchi,
father, malli, punchi nanda
and budu nanda



Photo 260:
Malli and I, punchi nanda
and budu nanda at the harbour

On May 7th 1962, my younger brother, Weeraman Jinadasa, sailed away to England. That was a sad day in my life since, as my only 'malli.' I loved him very much and the pain of separation was unbearable.

On July 24, 1962, my eldest son Vinya Shanthidas was born in the Maternity Hospital of Castle Street. During this time Srimathi Asha Devi and Mr. E. W. Ariyanayagam were here from India on a lecture tour speaking about Vinoba Bhave whose family name was Vinya, meaning 'light'. "This name was later changed by Mahatma Gandhi to Vinoba. My respect for this mentor of men and my intense desire to work as a Vinya courier of peace, were the causative factors in naming my son Vinya Shanthidas. That means "a servant dedicated to light the lamp of peace."



Photo 261: My eldest son,
Vinya Shanthidas



Photo 262: My second son,
Jeevan Dhammika

My second son, born April 3 1967, was named Jeevan Dhammika. My lectures at this time were around the theme, "The value of a good Life." (Dharmista) So I named him Jeevan Dhammika.

He was born on April 3, 1967 with a portending signal that he would end up an air pilot. The very next week, the Asia Foundation donated a Mitsubishi jeep to our Movement.

Dr. S. H. P. Nanayakkara was the doctor who delivered all my children and grandchildren. At times, he himself paid the hospital bill, perhaps rationalizing that since both Neetha and I worked voluntarily for the well-being of the country, that he should help us do so.



Photo 263:
Prof. S.H.P. Nanayakkara



Photo 264:

Ajith (l), son of the eldest sister of Neetha. In the middle Charika, and Vinya (r)

Whenever I travelled abroad, Senators Hon. Abhayaratne Ratnayake and Hon. D.L.F. Pedris looked after my wife and kids. My three older children were involved in Sarvodaya Shramadana work since their days in the womb.

Here I must mention the Buddama Camp (June 16-21, 1962). On our first visit there, we could only go as far as Polonnaruwa due to some complications but we later carried out a successful camp there. Almost everyday during this time, I delivered a lecture at some institution or other. One such lecture was a lecture delivered on July 23, 1962, to the Kandy Teachers' Union. One year later, when I was again invited by this Union to give a lecture, I met a white gentleman who made a request to repeat this talk at a voluntary service conference in Bangkok. I accepted the invitation. That heralded the extension of the movement, so far limited to the island, to the whole world.



Photo 265:

Amara and Vajira, my younger sisters, with Charika, Vinya and Jeevan, in front of the House Under the Breadfruit Tree

Mr. Albert Wijegunewardene

Mr. R. A. Wijegunewardene, an old boy of Nalanda College, one day made a sudden visit to the House Under the Breadfruit Tree, in the aftermath of the Kanatoluwa camp. He made frequent visits to Nalanda College, but this was his first deliberate visit to my house. He praised our camp work. I remembered him visiting us at Kanatoluwa.



Photo 266: Mr. Albert Wijegunewardena and I

Telling me that he was now a Director of Bentota Elasto Company, he said he had come on behalf of his colleague directors, Messrs. Wilson Gunasekera and Donald Gunasekera, to request that I visit the shoe factory at Bentota. We scheduled a day for the visit. I think Mr. W. D. Peetan, who was later involved in Sarvodaya work, accompanied Mr. Wijegunewardene that day. I went to the Elasto factory in the latter's car as I had no vehicle of



Photo 267:

Mrs Chitra Wijegunewardena distributing coconut saplings at Kanatoluwa

my own. Once on the premises, it dawned on me that he was the master of the place. Mr. Donald Gunasekera demonstrated to me how the machinery worked and explained how they were utilising raw material of the rubber and competing with Bata and DSI companies. Mr. Wilson Gunasekera was the Managing Director.

I was asked to address the workers in the factory. In my lecture, I dwelt on the following aspects: the creative prowess of the Elasto directors, the economic contribution they made to the country by launching a domestic industry such as this and the service rendered to the workers. I focused in simple language on parts of the Singalawada Sutta and the economic philosophy propounded by Mahatma Gandhi.

A Cambridge car was often offered by Mr. Wijegunewardena for our work. It was he who officiated at the ceremony where the jeep was presented to us by the Asia Foundation along with some equipment - our first foreign aid, incidentally. By this time, Mr. Wijegunewardena had become President of the Sarvodaya Society. He held this post from 1966 to 1968. Until he and his wife breathed their last, I was mindful of their needs and comforts.

Others who held the Presidency of Sarvodaya Society were Mr. D. Arampatta (1963-1964) and Mr. M. W. Karunananda (1969-1975). Since 1976, I have acted as the President.



Photo 268:

Gifting of Jeep No. 5 Sri 1106 by the Director Mr. Noyes

In the 1960s, I exercised my 'selflessness to the utmost. Though I bore the brunt of Sarvodaya work, I allotted the higher offices of the Movement to others while I held on to lesser posts. Though people like Mr. Karunananda always regarded me as the Sarvodaya leader, I regarded myself as a Sarvodaya worker. My creative energy was invested in formulating the Sarvodaya philosophy, principles, organizational structure, exploration of



Photo 269:

From l to r - Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe, Mr. Wijedasa Mahawatte, I, Mr. D.A. Perera, Mr. Sarath Hewagama, Mr. Cyril Ekanayake and Mr. Dharmasena Senanayake

resources, relations with the public and with educating the public. In the meantime, those I put up on the pedestals of office enjoyed not only plums of the office but privileges as well. I did not mind this at all.

But the selfishness of some seemed to gather momentum and weaken the very fabric of the revolutionary, yet non-violent (ahimsa) movement I had nurtured. I let those people disappear into the canyons of despair and took over the reins of Sarvodaya myself. Selfless and true Sarvodaya workers such as Messrs. Dharmasena Senanayake, Kamal Dissanayake, Dharma Gunasinghe, M. A. Tillakaratne, Amrat Amalian, William Kandage, P. W. Mahawatte, K. Dassanayake, D. A. Perera, Cyril Ekanayake and Mrs. Sita Rajasuriya, I chose as pilots for the Movement while I remained at the helm.

Thus we were able to establish the premier non-political people's participatory organization in our island.

Batticaloa Panichchankerni Camp

The first racial conflict in Sri Lanka took place in 1958. I was witness to scenes connected to this conflict as I stood before New City Stores in Maradana watching the Tamil shops being consumed by fire. An MP, Mr. V.T. Nanayakkara, helplessly watched it all along with me. That very night, I remember him reporting to the Prime Minister the havoc created. The incident that sparked this conflict, I later learned, was the murder of a Sinhala planter named Seneviratne at Batticaloa. He had been shot in Panichchankerni, a village north of Batticaloa. As a result of lectures delivered at Vantharumulla Central College by Mr. Ariyananda Abeysekera and me, it was decided to stage a shramadana camp in Panichchankerni using the combined labour of Sinhala and Tamil students. Mr. A.C. Abraham, the Rural Development Officer, was in charge of organizing the activities. Along with teachers and students of Nalanda, I took part in this camp held from 23rd to 30th of August, 1959.

The significant event that occurred at this camp was a threat received from Mrs. Olagasekera, a sister of Mr. S. J.V. Chelvanayagam, the leader of the Federal Party. Arriving there, she ordered us to leave immediately. Since I was indisposed at this time and relaxing in the office, the threat was directed at me. Without making a retaliation, I asked her to observe the unity with which the Tamil and Sinhala students worked. Soon she was watching the shramadana in action. The Sinhala students were trying to talk Tamil and Tamil students trying to talk Sinhala. They were all investing united labour in repairing wells, in building a community centre, clearing the ground for home gardens and even running a barber salon.

Mrs. Olagasekeran spent the whole day with us, praised our work and apologised for her earlier harsh words. She ensured a supply of food for our camp.

In this area, from 1962 onwards we conducted three camps in which Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims worked together. Seminars on the need to forge national unity were held in all the camps. I must also mention the National Integration Camp held at Gandhi Nilayam Ashram in Kilinochchi in August, 1962 and the multi-racial camps held at Periyakulam off Trincomalee, then at Wilgam Vehera Raja Maha Vihare, followed by those of a similar nature at Paraganwela, Murusamotai, Kegalle, Bulathsinhala and Nedalagamuwa.

With my memory refreshed by the diary notes left by Mr. Kandage, I go on to discuss the fact that if optimum state support and patronage had been given to our programme, the national crises we face today might have been averted.

Neerveli Kaithadi Shramadana Camp in Jaffna

(April 11-25, 1964)

In the aftermath of the friction that arose with those inhabiting the North, the flow of people from the South to the Jaffna Peninsula was restricted to pilgrims visiting the Nagadipa shrine, to bakery owners, to carpenters, masons, and to government officers.

Soon the Sarvodaya Shramadana camps were acting as instruments for the Sinhalese and Tamils to create a solidarity front.

The Gandhi Nilayam Ashram in Uruthirapuram off Kilinochchi, established early links with Sarvodaya. Tamil lead-



Photo 270:

The First Peace Walk to Jaffna - the occasion when Mr. P. Navaratnam, MP and 300 residents of Jaffna participated along with 300 Sarvodaya workers from the south

ers such as Mudaliyar S. Sinnathambi. S. K. Velayutha Pillai, S. K. Thambipillai and Dr. K. Nesiah visited my Maradana abode to have discussions. After talks with people such as Messrs. M. W. Karunananda, M. A. Tillakaratne, Dharmasena Senanayake and Prof. L.G. Hewage, it was decided to stage the Neerveli-Kaithadi camp.

Accordingly, groups of about 300 Sinhalese entrained to Jaffna in special compartments of the Jaffna-bound train. The prelates, Ven. Thunnane Sumanathissa Thero, Ven. Welmille



Photo 271:
Ven. Pandit Welmille
Somananda Thero

Somananda Thero and late Batakettara Revatha Thero, Head of Anuradhapura International Buddhist Library, also joined us. I was sitting for my Degree examination at this time. Many still remember how I rushed to catch the train just after my last paper. My mother also came along, cradling her grandchild Vinya (my son who was one year and 8 months at the time) on a pillow. Near her, Neetha sat with 3 year old Charika on her lap. So, three generations participated in this camp. About 25 people from the Kegalle area got on the train at Polgahawela. We went to Jaffna very exhilarated - singing Sarvodaya songs and having our meals in the train. From Jaffna, we travelled to Neerveli by bus.

After a warm reception we sat down for dinner consisting of delicious Jaffna food such as thosai, vadai and itly (South Indian foods). For dessert, we had mouth-watering 'payasam,' made of sago, milk and cadjunuts. It just titillated the Sinhala palates. At the night family gathering, the audience was given instructions about camp discipline and duties. Then a musical reception was accorded to us followed by participation in the annual Pooja to the gods at Neerveli kovil (Hindu temple). The procession of the Sinhalese to the Devale was led by Mr. Kandage who carried a large 'pooja watti' (tray with flowers) on his head. It was a magnificent scene. Thousands of devotees carrying torches or vilakku were wending their way to the music of Nathasvaram and drums.



Photo 272:

From L to R - Mr. Navaratnam, Mr. Nevil Jayaweera (GA), I,
Ven. Batakettara Revatha Thero

At the entrance to the Kovil, the warmth displayed by Sinhalese and Tamil communities to each other was tremendous. They virtually embraced each other and cried. Some performed a very traditional mode of reception with tasty oil cakes. Bananas and vadai were in bounty as well as cool beverages and sherbet. The head priest of the temple then placed on the altar of the kovil the pooja vatti carried by us as well as their own vattis. Then the chanting of hymnal songs to gods began. The perfumed incense curled in circles around the heads of the devotees. Fragrance wafted all over. The whole edifice dedicated to the gods came alive with dance, instrumental music and song. Arches decked with banana trees and flowers and festooned with creepers added to the resplendent scenario. After three hours, we returned to our lodgings.

Lodgings were arranged for us at Neerveli Maha Vidyalaya (school) and neighbouring houses. The next day, we woke up at 5 a.m. 'Bed tea' was replaced by 'Malli Thanni,' a mixture of coriander water and milk. Morning ablutions followed, then came the cleaning up of the surroundings. After breakfast, the camp was declared open by the traditional lighting of the lamp. Mr. V.



Photo 273:

Mr. Nevil Jayaweera (GA) and Mr. K. Nesiiah and others cutting the first sods

Navaratnam, MP for Chavakachcheri, Ven. Batakettara Revata Thero, Mudaliyar Sinnethambi and I lit the lamp.

The Sinhalese and Tamils started the shramadana work in combined groups. The mammoties pounded on the soil as rough and hard as concrete. The work was very exhausting. After a session of morning work, we went for a wash-up at the banana



Photo 274:

Mr. Nevil Jayaweera addressing the gathering. Seated from the left: Ven. Revata Thero and Ven. Welmille Somananda Thero



Photo 275:
My mother and my sister Lalana at Nirwelli Kaithadi camp in Jaffna

estates. Each banana tree had only about 3 saplings. A big tap attached to a motor in the well, diverted water to a drain whose sub-drains drew water to each banana plant.

From these water pumps, we bathed. These banana estates serve the Colombo banana market. We were intrigued by this discovery. We had lunch at the school. It was served on banana leaves and was fully vegetarian. For dessert, we had banana and 'payasam' that had become a favourite among us. Now began the afternoon family gathering.

There was a band display by the most skilled band group of the area. Then our cultural pageant monitored by the dancing maestro Heenbaba Dharmasiri was presented. Amidst loud applause, speeches were made by Mr. Tillakaratne, by me, Dr. Nesiah and Dr. Shironmani Rajaratnam. Mr. S.K. Thambipillai acted as the translator.

After the family gathering, again the camp commenced. The hot rays of the sun enervated the workers. A dry wind and brittle earth added to the tedium. But we worked till 5 p.m..

On the way back, we saw a corpse being cremated. Much wood was consumed by the fire for the cremation, and this was an issue we discussed. We again had a generous bath from the generator in the banana estates.

Having had an early dinner, we reviewed the camp work, prepared the upcoming programme and got ready to view a cultural pageant. This gathering was headed by Mr. Crossette Tambiah, Judge of the Supreme Court. A renowned band in Jaffna made its presentation first, followed alternately by Tamil and Sinhala pieces. Mr. Tambiah's speech signalled the end of the day's programme.



Photo 276:
Dr. Shironmani Rajaratnam

The Third Day Camp

After the customary routine and ritual we went to the camp. Within an hour we got news of a wounded participant. Mr. Kandage cycled there and found someone sprawled on the ground with a mamoty injury and discovered him to be Mr. Wijeyawickrema of Mr. Kandage's staff. Having bandaged him with equipment from first aid boxes, we took him to Jaffna Hospital in a lorry. Tikiri Banda of Aranayake was put in charge of him. They stayed a week at the hospital. The camp ended with a cultural pageant.

The Fourth Day Camp

A nerve-racking experience was in store for me on the fourth day. The cultural group from Colombo suddenly decided to go back. But tickets had already been bought for us to go together, thus entailing a sudden expense for me. Their childish behaviour just devastated me. Having already taken loans, I could not ask anybody for more money. The situation made me tearful, a condition noticed by my mother who informed Mr. Kandage and Mr. Arampatta. They coerced me to come out with the problem and then they finally solved it and sent the group back to Colombo.

The next day our Tamil brethren, elated by the shramadana, organized a trip for our benefit to the Jaffna peninsula. First we went to visit the Hot Springs at Keerimalai. Six buses were organized by the DRO, Mr. Sivanathan. On the way, we had a view of

the Hindu kovils, the tobacco plantations, and also an overview of the day-to-day life of the Tamils. The Keerimalai hot springs are situated by the sea but the brackish water from the land constantly flows into it. This, the Hindus reckon as a miracle. Many in our group walked to the kovil in the proximity to receive the blessings of the gods. Then, through the profusion of palmyrah (palm) trees, we went onto worship at Naga Deepa (Buddhist shrine).

Having witnessed the ancient Buddhist carvings on the 'Ther' (chariot) in the Hindu kovil, we paid homage to Buddha at the Nagadeepa Vihara as the moon rays shone on the highest point. After this, we got into motor launches and arrived at Pungudutiv. From there, we went back to Neerveli Camp by bus along roads spanning lagoons. That night the farewell family gathering and the fireworks display took place. Again, the camp transformed itself into a venue for the display of indigenous sports and folk entertainment.

The next day after breakfast, our group went by special buses to Jaffna Station. Several Tamil leaders joined us on this return trip. Among them were Mudaliyar Sinnethamby, Mr. Velayutha Pillai, Mr. Thambipillai, Miss Rajaratnam, Mr. Kanagaratnam, a well-known jeweller, DRO Mr. Sivanathan, Dr. Nesiah and some Hindu clergy.

We bade each other an emotional farewell. The train taking us slowly moved away. The Tamils on the platform held their hands high, bidding us adieu. Men and women standing before their palm-frond huts waved at us happily. After about 3 miles Ven. Thunnane Sumanathissa Thero developed a stomach ailment. Lemon was needed as a cure. Just then, the train halted at a station and a lemon tree was visible in a yard of a house. Mr. Kandage got up, ran to the house, spoke to the owner of the house and came back with lemon fruits. He got in just as the train was about to start. The medicine mixed with lemon cured the prelate who was very thankful to Mr. Kandage. Our lunch had already been packeted for us by our Tamil brethren. So very merrily we came back to Colombo amidst song and laughter.

The Buddhist National Movement

In 1951, a deputation of delegates of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC) led by Prof. G. P. Malalasekera met the then Prime Minister Mr. D.S. Senanayake and requested the appointment of a Committee to look into the discrimination to which Buddhists were being subjected. Though he assented to this at first, in the next meeting Mr. Senanayake informed everyone that the Constitution was a deterrent to such an action.

It was under these circumstances that the ACBC decided to appoint a Commission to collect 'Buddhist data' at the Annual General Meeting of 1953 held in Kegalle. Mr. N. Q. Dias, who worked as Registrar General, was instrumental in collecting a good deal of evidence for this report and so the relevant commission was received well by the Buddhist public.

The copious work of compiling the data was performed by Mr. L.H. Mettananda. The matter related to the clergy was handled separately by the Most Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Mahanayaka Thero and Ven. Henpitagedera Gnanaseeha Nayaka Thero. Further, Buddhist leaders such as Prof. Tennekoon Vimalananda and the lawyer Mr. C.D.S. Siriwardena, helped in the final work. In 1956, 256 page report was handed to the Maha Sangha.

Neither the Government nor the UNP agreed to carry out the recommendations of this report but Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and Mr. Phillip Gunawardena promised to implement them if they ever come to power. I was a youth when I attended the meeting held at Colombo Municipality where this promise was made. Buddhist leaders led by Mr. Mettananda through an Executive

Committee supplied information to the SLFP and MEP United Front, while the clergy of all the Nikayas led by Ven. Henpitagedera Gnanaseeha Nayake Thero made the report accessible to the public and thereby engendered a lot of interest in it.

The historical political revolution that followed was enacted in 1956. But unfortunately due to the mediation of Mr. D.C. Wijeyawardene,

a faction led by Ven. Mapitigama Buddharakkhita Thero with selfish motives of their own joined this alliance and diverted the revolution to an undesired end.

It was at this juncture that I got disillusioned with politics. An idea was born in my mind that a social revolution minus political colouring should be staged. The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement was the outcome of this thinking.

The first years of the decade of the '60s were crucial for Sri Lankan society. The expectations from the political ahimsa revolution launched by Mr. Bandaranaike were receding. The assassination of this leader in 1959 and the fact that the assassin was a monk in Buddhist robes were capitalised on by anti-Buddhist forces to decimate the respect hitherto accorded to our Maha Sangha.

The Buddhist resurgence spawned by the Buddha Jayanthi (2500 year celebration of the Birth of the Buddha) too was fading away. I always viewed the Buddha Dhamma and Sinhala culture in a universal context. It was never my intention to label us narrowly as Buddhists and fight for rights in a parochial way. Instead my dream was to acclimatize the whole world to a Buddhist ethos. Further, I was of the firm conviction that only through Buddhism could a socio-economic and political structure acceptable to



277 Prof. Ven. Henpitagedera Gnanavasa Thero,
Ven. Gnanaseeha Thero and Sumedha Thero (a
Swiss national)

everyone in our island be built. According to my way of thinking, working for the upliftment of Buddhism, would not entail attacking other religions. That would involve the destruction of the very cause. Yet this attitude did not prevent me from condemning and opposing any activity that was aimed at disparaging Buddhism.

The optimum help for resuscitation of the sacred city of Anuradhapura was given by our movement. Among our other religious activities were the construction of an 11-mile-long road to Wilgam Vehera in Trincomalee and the repair of this temple, and helping in the preservation of such shrines as Seruwila and historical Girihandu Saya where the hair relic of the Buddha had been deposited by Tapassu and Bhalluka. In our further move of focusing public attention on these places of Buddhist vintage, the following were very helpful - Ven. Balapitiya Shantha Thero, Ven. Maduwa Ratanavamsa Tissa Thero, Ven. Balapitiya Chandrawimala Tissa Thero and Mr. A.H. Alwis who owned the ferry service at Trincomalee. Our work in the North and East around these shrines was immense and surpasses the work done by any other body before or since.

Two magazines begun by me entitled 'Nagenahira' (The East) and 'Janma Bhoomiya' (Birth Land) also had as their objective the drawing of public attention to these places. We built more than 100 Sanghawasas for monks who had passed out of Vidyodaya Pirivena and were residing in outstations. Ten schools for so-called 'low-caste' society children in Jaffna were built by us and handed to the State. Hindu leaders helped in that effort.

Weeratunga malli, an old Wesleyan, was in charge of construction of these buildings. On the suggestion of the Hindu leaders, the schools were named after senior Buddhist prelates and after lay figures such as Mrs. Somie Meegama, Mr. P. De. S. Kularatne, Mr. L.H. Mettananda and Mr. Ananda Semage. Only two schools were named after Hindu leaders. The President of the



Photo 278:
Ven. Henpitagedera Gnanasecha
Nayaka Thero

Tamil Buddhist Society was a very energetic worker in our cause. Thus it was not on hatred and animosity we worked but on the positive tenets of Maitri (love) and Dana (giving).

Today, as then, certain 'National Buddhist Organizations' not only veered towards heretic beliefs but were acutely envious of me. Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy addressing the Ceylon Social Reforms League in 1907 once told the British, "You can rob us of all our natural resources. But do not descend to the crime of tainting the Sinhala social structure and culture. Enshrined in these Sinhala Buddhist villages is the social milieu that the whole world would need 100 years hence." It was Dr. Motwani, who stayed at our house for some time, who showed me a copy of this speech. I often used it to bring this gem of a speech to the attention of our Buddhist groups.

Dr. Coomaraswamy was a Tamil Hindu philosopher. Because of him, many Tamil scholars have seen the Sinhala Buddhists in this perspective. I was driven by an urge to nourish this philosophical view. But what did some of our nominally Buddhist leaders do? They wanted a Sinhala Buddhist State that would marginalise all other races and place themselves at its helm, in the style of our ex-rulers.

To commemorate the name of Anagarika Dharmapala using the Agrashravaka Vihara of Maligakanda I established an Anagarika Dharmapala Youth Society, enrolling 100 young men and women. I got Mr. A.T.C. Jinadasa to compose a commemorative song on this great savant and got the children to recite it. I followed the same program for the national heroes such as Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thero, Ven. Asarana Sarana Saranankara Sangharaja Maha Thero and Walisinghe Harischandra.

Certain genuine patriots getting sensitized to the voluminous work of our movement were now getting curious about me. Mr. L. H. Mettananda and Mr. T. U. De Silva were among them. The duo visited me at my House under the Breadfruit Tree and alerted me to the danger that a repetition of the destruction of Buddhists under Din Diem of Vietnam could happen in Sri Lanka. We were of the consensus that a work program to avert such a cri-

sis should be drawn up. Soon a proposal was made to hold the first meeting of the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya (Buddhist National Movement). Pioneers of this movement included an erudite Buddhist scholar named Gunaseela Withanage, Mr. Premachandra De Silva, Mr. C.H. Perera, and Mr. Wijayananda De Abrew among others.



Photo 279:
Mr. L. H. Mettananda

During this time, under the aegis of Mr. L. H. Mettananda an organization known as Buddhist Publicity Sabha was already running, with its office in Colombo 3. On November 7, 1962 under Mr. Mettananda's signature, an invitation letter was sent to a selected 100 to have a meeting. The theme of the discussion was to be "Future of the Sinhala Buddhist Society". The letter of invitation was as follows:

No. 161, Colombo 3.
7th Nov. 1962.

Dear Sir,

A Discussion About the Future of Sinhala Buddhist Society

As a result of the Report of the Buddhist Commission that was brought to the attention of the Maha Sangha and the general public on February 4, 1956 and also due to the Buddha Jayanthi Celebrations of that year, a Buddhist renaissance of unprecedented level surged in the aftermath, a fact we are all aware of. This trend culminated in a social revolution too. But certain power-crazy individuals who marched on the wave of this trend and wish to maintain themselves on the crest exploiting it are eroding the very strength of that movement. On the other hand the anti-Buddhists have got together in a strong unified force and are waving their banners against Buddhism and the Sinhala race. We are hemmed in between the Catholic action and the Federal Movement, placing Buddhist rights in a dangerous situation. The so-called Buddhist leaders more propelled by self-ego than the public cause enhance the danger.

These factors here given rise to an alarming situation where in all state institutions and public institutions the Buddhists are discriminated against, cruelly. A deliberate plan along these lines is now being activated, so has come the time to face this situation.

As an initial step we wish to summon a discussion to generate a Sinhala Buddhist force unencumbered by party politics.

This meeting will be held at the Buddhist Women's Congress Hall, No. 400, Buller's Road, Colombo 7 at 5.00 p.m. Tuesday on November, 1962. Out of devotion to the Sasana I earnestly appeal to you to attend this meeting.

Signed
Yours truly,
L.H. Mettananda

We obtained the Hall of the All Ceylon Women's Buddhist Congress from Mrs. Somie Meegama, President and held our first meeting there. We personally met and invited Mr. D.B. Dhanapala, Davasa Editor, Mr. D.P. Jayasekera, Chief Telegraphs Engineer, Prof. K. Jayasuriya, Mr. Ananda Semage, Mr. W.J. Fernando, Ayurveda Commissioner and Mr & Mrs. A.N.S. Kulasinghe for this discussion.

I got a call from Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne, then Government Agent, Anuradhapura, saying that he was just appointed Secretary of the Public Service Commission and he sought an appointment with me. I invited him to my House Under the Breadfruit Tree.

He told me that it was no longer possible to tolerate the surging Catholic action and that our ancient Buddhist scriptures were being made a 'bon fire' on the Western Coast. He said he was in a frenzy to join a Buddhist revival movement.

Ancient Buddhist texts like the *Lovada Sangarawa*, *Lokopakaraya*, *Subhashitaya*, *Guttilaya*, *Muwa Dev Davatha*, *Saddharma Ratnavaliya* and *Poojavaliya* that we had learned by heart had suddenly disappeared from bookshops such as P. K.W. Siriwardena Bookshop and Samayawardena Bookshop. Rumour was rife that a certain group had bought them and consumed them to fire!

I told Mr. Wijeratne that the Buddhist resurgence should take place without antagonising other faiths. I told him that the Sarvodaya Movement I had founded was not focused on a single race or religion or creed but was based on pure Buddhist philosophy. Within these constraints I was ready to lend him any support. On his suggestion, we went to meet one Mr. Mettananda. Then we went on to meet Mr. Ronnie De Mel, who also agreed to support our cause. Both of them attended our first meeting and on my proposal, they were elected office-bearers .

Mr. Gunaseela Withanage, a very honest and learned intellectual, was made our Secretary. Mr. L.H. Mettananda, Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne and Mr. Ronnie De Mel were appointed President, Vice-President and Treasurer respectively. I volunteered to work as a Committee Member.

Another factor that led to the burgeoning of this movement needs mention. Towards the end of January in 1962 a coup-d'etat was planned to seize power. The figures behind this were Colonel F.C. de Saram, Royce de Mel, Deputy Police Chief C.C. Dissanayake, Mr. Sydney de Zoysa and several others at the helm of the army, navy and police. They were almost all non-Buddhist and the public viewed the coup-de-tat as an attempt to overthrow Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike's government. It could have been also an attempt to revive the pre-1956 conditions of the country which had existed before the social revolution that took place that year. Issues that they opposed included using Sinhala as the



Photo 280:
IGP Mr. Stanley Senanayake

administrative language, teaching science via 'swabasha,' (native language) taking over state assisted schools, and other structural changes which comprised this social transformation. These proved an anathema to certain individuals who enjoyed plums of privilege. Further, they could not tolerate the leftist elements who were holding the reins of government.

The Police Superintendent of Colombo at this time was Mr. Stanley

Senanayake. His wife was Mrs. Maya Senanayake and father-in-law was Mr. P. De S. Kularatne. The Inspector-General of Police Mr. M.W.F. Abeykoon was alerted to this planned coup, but there was no response. Mrs. Bandaranaike was also alerted. Mr. C.C. Dissanayake, the Deputy Police Chief, was summoned and interrogated and handed over to Mr. S.A. Dissanayake, in charge of C.I.D., a brother of one of the conspirators but who was unaware of the machinations. About 20 were rounded up and remanded. A Special Court pronounced them guilty, but certain legal loopholes made their release possible a few months later by the Privy Council.

It was Mr. Stanley Senanayake who almost sacrificed his life to break up this conspiracy. Born in Kitulgala, his full name is Don Stanley Ernest Perera Rajapakse Senanayake. Born in 1917 he became a Police Superintendent in 1943. When I got to know him in 1961 he was Director of the Police Training School.

Maya Senanayake, daughter of Mr. P. De S. Kularatne, worked as Director of Swabasha Publications, which later carried the name P. De S. Kularatne Co. The first Sarvodaya magazines and newspapers were published there. Hence I used to visit their office daily in the course



Photo 281:
With Mrs. Maya Senanayake

of which I got to know Mrs. Senanayake, Mr. Stanley Senanayake and their four sons, Sanjeeva, Saliya, Athula and Milinda. Mr. Senanayake was a regular visitor to the House Under the Bread Fruit Tree. I also used to be invited to the lectures at the Police Training School and the Police Headquarters.

We ended up really close friends. Though Mr. Senanayake played the chief role in sabotaging the coup-d'etat, influential people maneuvered to put him on paid leave and put off his appoint-

ment to the Chief of Police. During this time, between 1962 and 1968, he spent the evenings at my house reading books. I consoled him, saying his day would come. In 1970 he was reinstated. His call to office and a resumption of his duties brought me boundless joy.

We went on organizing the Buddhist National Movement meetings all over the country. Very senior prelates and lay intellectuals such as Prof. K.N. Jayatileke and Mr. K.H.M. Sumathipala delivered speeches. The latter used to make reference to the Vietnam massacres and this really proved very emotive. Other speakers were Ven. Kalukondayawe Pannasekera Mahanayake Thero, Most Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha Mahanayake Thero, Ven. Devamottawe Amarawansa Thero and Ven. Baddegama Wimalawamsa Nayaka Thero.

Mr. Mettananda was in the habit of delegating the first speech to me since I always based my faith on ahimsa (non-violence) principles and refrained from attacking other religions. The BJB edited a small book compiling data about Catholic actions. Simultaneously, Mrs. Bandaranaike's government established a Press Commission. We utilised this Commission to highlight anti-Buddhist activities and focus attention on immoral acts treacherous to the nation. Retired District Judge, Mr. K.D. de Silva headed this Commission. Except for one meeting that was held during my hospitalisation, I spoke at all the other meetings. Mr. W.J. Fernando's Benz was often used to drive Mr. Mettananda and Mr. T. U. de Silva to these meetings. Sometimes vehicles belonging to Mr. D.P. Jayasekera, Mr. M.W. Karunananda and Mr. A. N. S. Kulasinghe too were used. I was often the driver. Mr. Dharmasena Weeraratne, a businessman, was another untiring warrior in our movement. People by the thousands flocked to our meetings held in Polonnaruwa, Medawachchiya, Badulla, Kandy, Ratnapura,



Photo 282:
Ven. Baddegama Wimalavamsa
Nayaka Thero

Kalutara, Beruwela, Galle and Matara. They used to come in processions. It was a Buddhist resurgence at its sizzling peak.

In some instances, Hindu leaders such as Sir Kandiah Vaidyanathan used to grace the stage along with Mr. Mettananda. In the highly attended meeting held before Ananda College, he was also present. Thousands from the Port Buddhist Association led by Mr. A. N. S. Kulasinghe and Mr. Punchihewa attended this meeting. The Hindu leaders were reacting to the conversion of Hindus to Catholicism in Thiruketheeswaram and joined hands with the Buddhists in their protests. Whether they wanted to or not, both Mr. Nissanka Wijeratne and Mr. Ronnie de Mel emerged as national leaders during this period. It was Mr. Gunaseela Vithanage really who toiled over the paperwork and research data of our Buddhist National Movement (in Sinhala it was called BJB). Mr. Premachandra de Silva and Mr. Wijenanda De Abrew were two other indefatigable workers.

About two or three late-comers to our movement began spurning the high ideals we stood for and veered this movement towards political leanings. I protested to Mr. Mettananda and left the BJB, desirous of concentrating fully on Sarvodaya work. With time, the BJB disappeared into oblivion, but it did much in its heyday.

At this time, I exerted a lot of energy to give an interpretation of our National Flag that would be acceptable to the people. The yellow and red colours could symbolize *Dhamma Dvipa* and *Dhanyagara* concept, respectively, (an Island of Righteousness and Economic Self-Sufficiency), the four *Bo* leaves could signify the full blossoming of a human's personality through the four-fold



Photo 283:
Dr. A. N. S. Kulasinghe

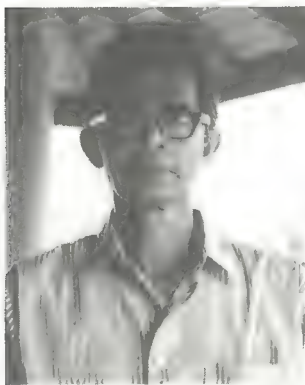


Photo 284:
Mr. Wijayananda De Abrew

Brahma Viharana and the four-fold values on which human progress rests. The three feet of the lion, that touch the earth could symbolise *Anitya* (Impermanence), *Dukka* (Sorrow) and *Anathma* (soullessness) while the sword flashing in his right hand could represent the *Dasa Raja Dharma* - the Ten precepts that rule the behaviour of a good king. What does the very symbol of lion stand for? The qualities required by a progressive nation such as self-discipline, self-confidence, courage, self-sufficiency, abstention from immoral acts. That was my interpretation of the Lion Flag.



Photo 285:
Mr. W. J. Fernando

Once seated in Havelock Golf Grounds, I enlightened Mr. Upali Senanayake with my interpretation of the Lion Flag. He not only committed it to memory but also got more information from a monk, like a mantram - sounding recitation that explained every part of the Lion Flag in the context of Buddhist philosophy. If one would just provoke him, he would go on and on and delve into Sarvodaya philosophy too. Such a patriot he is. Once he was Vice President of the Sarvodaya Movement as well.

Mr. L. H. Mettananda, mentioned before, stands out among the Buddhist mentors with whom I associated. I first saw him when I came to Ananda College way back in 1951 as a member of the Mahinda College Debating Team. It was the tradition then to stage an Ananda-Mahinda debate before the cricket match between the two colleges. Mr. Mettananda was impressed with my speech and praised it. After I joined Nalanda College staff we became good friends.

He was an exemplary character - humble, courageous, principled, living a simple life style and never bearing rancour. He spurned high posts offered to him by the State – even Ministerial and Ambassador posts. Economically, he was under pressure but would never give up his principles for personal gain. He was almost my Guru. Born on March 19, 1894, he passed away on November 1, 1967. We participated fully at the last rites of this great man.



Photo 286: Mr. Wilmot A. Perera, Philanthropist with the present Cabinet Minister Hon. Ronnie de Mel (seated) during a Sarvodaya Annual Conference at the Dharmapala Vidyalaya, Pannipitiya

Before I end this chapter on the Buddhist National Movement, it is fitting to record a lapse on all of our parts. That is, that the Sinhala Buddhists did fight for the lost rights that could be gained from the socio, economic and political ethos we lived in, but we never courted enough support from non-Sinhala and non-Buddhist elements who also had their difficulties in generating national unity and national revival.

The Tamil Hindus were subject to the same discrimination that tormented the Sinhala Buddhists. It is true that a segment of their community once enjoyed the plums of top government posts. It has to be admitted that some of the discrimination that the poor Sinhala Buddhist was subject to hampered the progress of other communities also. Thus a Sarvodaya philosophy that could cater to filling the gap seen in the path of progress of all communities of the Island was my dream.

During this time I spent much of my time in improving my knowledge of Buddhism through the association of venerable prelates such as Ven. Dr. Kotagama Vachissara Thero, Ven. Bambaranda Siri Seevali Thero, Ven. Nattandiya Pagnasekera Thero, Ven. Ganagama Saranankra Thero, Ven. Kirivattuduwe Pragnasekera Thero, Ven. Talpawila Seelavansa Thero and Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula Thero. I digested fully the books written by them.

A Path to Buddhist Resurgence

For many years we, who were privileged to have seen the resurgent movement that Anagarika Dharmapala and Walisinghe Harischandra inspired, lived in the hope that Purpose and Direction would be given to the forces they liberated. We thought we lived in vain and sorrowed at the thought that our hopes were dissolving into illusory dreams. But the birth and phenomenal development of the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya (Buddhist National Movement) has rekindled the dying embers of belief that the long - awaited Movement has now arrived to lead us along the paths of justice and progress.



Photo 287:
Anagarika Dharmapala

The Three Great Ps

To me, the Rise or Fall of the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya depends upon three great factors, namely, the Purpose, the Purity and the Programme of the movement. I call these the three great Ps. Streamlined organisation and propaganda and heartening enthusiasm of its members and the general public will not take the movement very far unless the movement is spearheaded with a

clear Purpose, immense Purity and an intelligent Programme. Does the B.J.B. possess these characteristics, and to what degree? Let us examine it for ourselves.

A Deceptive Approach

At a time when the individual citizens of our country, both high and low, seem to be drifting aimlessly, without new values being developed to take the place of the values of the Buddhist Society that has been destroyed, and the community as a whole appears to have fallen into a state of uncertainty and indecision, the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya has come into being. One can take a superficial look at the B.J.B. (Buddhist National Movement) and arrive at hurried conclusions based on the failings and achievements of personalities whose names are linked with the movement. Or else one can view it from an immediate objective which has been placed before the people by the B.J.B. to inspire them to a greater awareness of the society in which they live and a new alertness to its problems. Both these approaches are deceptive and they will not help us to understand the real significance of this movement from a national perspective.

Understanding the Balavegaya

The personalities and the events which led to the birth of this movement, which has now gathered irresistible momentum, recede into insignificance when one understands the crying need at the present moment for a massive liberation of human energy and its proper direction in the best interests of the nation. If we are to survive and progress as a nation it is a MUST. From where and from whom can we expect the lead except from the Buddhists of this country, who constitute the vast majority of our population? Therefore, it is not a matter for surprise that this force has originated from among them. Neither should non-Buddhists have any fear nor lose hope, for basically, the awakening of Buddhists at this time is a natural consequence of past history and present trends. On the contrary, they should welcome it as a healthy sign and try to understand and comprehend the Purpose, the Purity and the Programme of the movement. It is necessary that these char-

acteristics should develop if the movement is to survive as a Bauddha (Buddhist) and Jatika (National) Balavegaya (Vital force.)

A Tribute

I have had the privilege of discussing the problems of the nation with the dedicated men, both big and small, who constitute the core of the B.J.B. and have gleaned from them the motivations and the purposes which have inspired them and serve as their sign posts. To a people corrupted by the divisive forces of the past their attitudes have appeared strange and bred misapprehension. It heartens me to see that barbs of criticism and the fires of condemnation appear to be purifying them and increasing their sense of dedication. Moved as I am by the good that their movement holds out for the people of this country, an inner urge compels me to pay this tribute to them by way of putting down in writing the PURPOSE, the PURITY and the PROGRAMME of the B.J.B., as seen by me, a humble follower of Acharya Vinoba Bhave whose one ideal is service in the welfare of all.

A Noble Ideal

We have come to the last stages of the Age of Science. A new age an age in which human civilization will reach its greatest glory is about to dawn upon us. History will call this age the Age of Science and Spirituality. Let us herald the dawn of this great era from Sri Lanka, this beautiful island home of ours, which I believe, is historically destined to be the centre of this newly - emerging world civilization.

No great task was successfully carried out without an idealism of the highest order as a forerunner to it. Today history has thrust upon us, the Buddhists of this country, the responsibility of serving humanity with an idealism of the noblest order. To work towards narrow objectives in life such as achieving and retaining power, and accumulating and spending wealth, is the pastime of ailing minds. It must be strictly left to those whose vision is confined to the small worlds they have created in their minds centering around their own individual selves. The strong should strive

towards the apparently unrealizable but always inspiring ideal of the noblest order. Even if the latter fall short of their distant ideal, still they will be far ahead of the accomplished but narrow goals of the former. That is the hard truth we must realize courageously within our own minds and hearts.

Age of Spirituality

Our Great Teacher is our greatest source of inspiration and guidance. The goal he set before himself was spread far out into billions of years - nay, into many world cycles. Yet he achieved it and 2552 years ago humanity experienced for the first time - and may be for the last time for many many centuries to come - the Supreme Spiritual Development in recorded human civilization. That was the Age of Spirituality.

The Age of Dhamma Vijaya

Dhammasoka was inspired by the Life and Teachings of the Buddha and the Age of Spirituality, he heralded in and lived through. Dhamma Vijaya became his one vision and ideal in life and he exerted the greatest civilizing force yet seen in the story of man to his day, and even to this day. Besides the Buddha's Age of Spirituality and Asoka's Age of Dhamma Vijaya, the one age that is bound to leave an indelible mark on the history of civilization with a view point of 'one world one civilization', is the Age of Science.

The Age of Science

I say the Age of Science is coming to an end. After five centuries of immense growth and full maturity it is coming to an end. Historically it must be so for the germ of its own destruction was planted in itself the day science became the instrument of exploitation of man by man. This age has seen the rise and fall of empires and dictatorships, imperialism and capitalism. The historical reaction to the latter, Socialism, appears to be on the ascendancy. The truth that when the cause is removed the effect will cease to exist will apply here to socialism also and I consider it to be another passing phase or rather the last chapter in the Age of Science.

Age of Science and Spirituality

This brings us face to face with the age that is about to dawn upon us - the Age of Science and Spirituality - and which I say is our responsibility to herald in. Weak heads may dismiss this idea as idealism of the maddest order, but a little thinking with a detached mind will clear any doubts on this score.

The Community Mind

Let us come to real facts in the context of our own land and society, its economic resources and stages of political development and, above all, the pulse-beat of the nation; but with due sensibility as to how the world moves.

All actions are preceded by a 'chetana' - a motive. The mind is supreme. That is the Dhamma - the Truth. Popular action in a community is set in motion by what is called a 'mass mind'. The 'mass mind' or 'the community consciousness' has become the most precious product of democracy.

In 1956 we created a 'mass mind' with only the first 'P' - that is the Purpose - and brought about a significant political revolution. Unfortunately we did not possess the other two 'P's - the Purity and the Programme - before us and the result was loss of direction and the nearly chaotic state of affairs we find in our country today.

Today the 'mass mind' is once again in a state of disintegration or fragmentation. But certainly it is wide awake, though in isolated parts, and waits till it hears the right call, the call with all the three 'P's.

"Who was going to give it, and how?" was the question. The B.J.B. gave it as a trial. The people readily responded. But they had only the second 'P' - the Purity - with them, and that too not to a sufficiently satisfying degree. However they treaded the right path of purity of mind and heart. Can the members of the B.J.B. arm themselves with all the three 'P's and awaken the nation from this suicidal slumber? I have unwavering faith that they can. Why?

A Buddhist Social Order

The Buddhists to a great extent and the Hindus to a lesser extent, together command the greatest national resource of the present day. It is not the wealth, not the bureaucracy, not the armed forces and not even the votes as some do believe. In the cultural heritage of every Buddhist (and every Hindu) there is a superficially unseen but inwardly alive awareness of trends that link his present with his past. In spite of all the damage done in the past by foreign invaders and in the present by powerful and organised anti-national elements and action movements, still this awareness lies dormant but ready to come up at the proper call. This hidden 'mass mind' has undoubtedly influenced the subconscious of the remaining cross-section of our population who do not profess the Buddhist or Hindu faith. As such the B.J.B. aims at evoking the 'mass mind' of the population as a whole without any trace of sectarianism but with definite motive force originating from and invigorating the movement as a result of the seeds of Buddhist culture that have firmly taken root in our national way of life. In other words, the general population should be able to accommodate themselves in the Buddhist Social Order the B.J.B. envisages. That is the meeting point of Science and Spirituality.

The Lasting Force

Catholic Action, organised religion, casteism, racialism, party politics and all the rest of the numerous divisive forces in society are spent forces. They are bound to decay and disintegrate before the irresistible tide of science that is already taking giant steps forward. The one and only force that can stand up to it and channel it along the path of general progress and well-being of all in society is the force of Buddhist spirituality. In fact science is the greatest friend of the Buddhist Way of Life and a proper blending of these two forces should be our one aim and Purpose. As soon as this purpose is set before the 'mass mind,' there is absolutely no doubt that both the intelligentsia and the common man - irrespective of the faith he professes - will grasp it, accept it and augment with unprecedented response of the 'mass mind' whatever efforts the B.J.B. will make towards its realization.

Science and Non - Violence

Science will not be appeased by an authoritarian, highly organised and commercialised religion. The Revivalism that is influencing Papal authority in the Vatican today will not be an effective answer to this challenge for the simple reason that the fundamental tenets on which the organised Christian Faith is built are shaken at their very roots. The fall of the might of the Dollar and the Vatican is only a matter of time.

Science has to be divorced from violence and wedded to non-violence if humanity is to survive on this planet; and I believe that humanity does want to survive. So do Messrs Kennedy and Krushchev. As such there is no other alternative than to accept non-violent science as the edifice on which the future world civilization has to be built. Non-violence has received the greatest sanction from Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhist Practice and Buddhist Civilization throughout history. Neither the Buddhist doctrine nor modern science recognizes any man - made barriers such as caste, creed, race, nationality or party politics. "Sabbe Satta Bhavanthu Sukhi Taththa," "May all beings be well and happy," is the key - note of both Non-violent Science and Buddhism. Buddhism does not strive to win over converts to its faith for it is not an organised religion as most other religions are. That is why we in Ceylon, occupy a unique place among the nations of the world today as the one nation which can evolve a non-violent social order where Science and Buddhism are combined.

Science and Socialism

Socialism is the only real world force today which has received the greatest blessing of science so far. The exploration into the secrets of matter and the energy in it and the application of the knowledge thus gained to explore the secrets of space have sanctioned the validity of the materialist precepts of socialism. Thus science has made Socialism the most scientifically acceptable formula to put an end to the exploitation of man by man, for undoubtedly, in the economic field, it has no rival who has combined better the scarce resources of land, labour, capital and organisation for the general good of all.

An end to economic exploitation results in a state of sharing. We, the Buddhists, call it 'Dana,' for 'Dana' in the original Sanskrit context of the word meant exactly this, sharing. The logical outcome or the next stage, after a state of sharing has been brought about in a society, is morality. We are used to calling it 'Sila'. Both 'Dana' or 'sharing' and 'Sila' or 'morality' in a material sense may be achieved in a socialist exploitation - free society and it also may appear to be very attractive to the mind which is exclusively trained in material science. We do not agree as to the means adopted and generally advocated by protagonists of socialism. However, there is no question as to the superiority of socialism in the economic field viewed from the benefits it accrues to the community, as compared with the capitalist society where private ownership and cut-throat competition are the salient features. Similarly at the social level the socialist world can boast of a higher level of individual and social morality quite different from that of its greatest capitalist counterpart in the Western Hemisphere where morality has reached its lowest ebb.

Where Socialism Fails

The human being is never content with a well fed stomach and good behaviour. The insatiable urge in him to explore into his inner being, his 'self,' raises its head at every turn. The material science and socialist dogma cannot quench this thirst. Neither can the outmoded beliefs of theistic religion exert an influence in keeping with the knowledge of science. In other words, in the socialist society in spite of the fact that sharing and morality (Dana and Sila) may be present still there is a significant vacuum which cannot be filled with materialism alone. In other words 'Dana' and 'Sila' need 'Bhavana' (meditation) - I would rather call it Realization of the Inner-Self, for the full bloom of the human being of the coming age. The present split in the socialist world demonstrates very well the utter futility of trying to work towards unity of mankind on materialistic precepts alone without giving it direction from self-purification and spiritual awakening.

Role of the B.J.B.

It is in this attempt that the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya ceases to be a reaction to any other 'ism' or 'action' or movement. It stands on its own rooted in our culture, as an all-embracing force, the resultant force of all the forces in the world which influence our society, and as the one force that can outlive the Age of Science and initiate the Era of Science and Spirituality. We should not be deceived by the illusion that our country is too small to undertake this gigantic task. No country is too small in the world of today to influence the rest of the world if singlemindedness of purpose is set before its 'community mind'.

Lanka today has all the requisites to awaken the community mind. Still our country is a land of villages. There is an elderly village population still holding fast to the traditional values of a religious culture, an adult population disillusioned by the failure of political parties, a young population ready to accept the leadership of a scientific course of action inspired by the science of today and the culture of yesterday, and a Maha Sangha who can spearhead the moral force of an all-round nationalist, but at the same time humanistic, revival.

A clear-cut Purpose, Purity of means for its realization and a Scientific Programme of social action under an enlightened and self-less leadership is bound to capture the imagination of the vast majority of population in our country irrespective of their caste, creed, race or political affiliations. Such a leadership has necessarily to be a non-party-political one and the B.J.B. has very wisely steered clear of all party-political affiliations.

A Non - Party and an a - Political Body

Political parties are not indispensable instruments for the proper functioning of democratic institutions. Our present Parliamentary form of Government cannot be considered to be the only form of political institution which can preserve the democratic way of life. On the contrary, one begins to think that these institutions are wrong adaptations of democratic ideals and have not given back to the people what they aspired. Have we not wasted all our human talents and material resources by dabbling in this

mockery of party politics which we have mis-named Democracy but which in effect was Divisocracy? Democracy must begin with the people from below, with the village as the base. Today, in reality what is practiced as democracy is a burden on the people. It has resulted only in adding one more divisive factor into the community, and giving immense scope for the development of the individual's baser qualities of hunger for power, position and wealth rather than evoking his virtues of self-sacrifice, service and inner purity. All political parties must accept the blame for this state of affairs. Under these circumstances it is a very healthy sign that the B.J.B. has absolutely no tow with any one or all political parties. The B.J.B. has accepted ten guiding principles one of which in no uncertain terms has tabooed party politics.

The real ingredients of democracy are popular representation, a just administration, and an independent judiciary. A people must be able to formulate the principles and patterns by which they are governed, be confident that the law ensures that these are given effect to, and that the society they live in is safe from crime and violence and above all be provided with every opportunity to participate in matters relating to their own advancement.

A party system in the long run can be self-defeating. It can breed exclusiveness and hatred, dogmatism and intolerance. But an organisation that seeks to embrace all, purify them and make each and every one an instrument for good has a validity of its own which none can deny. The institutionalising of a permanent opposition requires an independent centre of power and balance in the person of a ceremonial Head of State without effective power, while a Head of Government representing only a section of the people wields the actual authority. A combination of President and Chief Minister in one person guided by a Council of all talents and relieved of the burdens of electoral management could more effectively handle a programme of development while Parliamentary Committees could by its representative character offer valuable advice in so far as the work of government affects the people and by its control of Finance ensure an essential check on irresponsible administration.

The co-ordination of the important departments of State to ensure swift translation of plan to fact and the establishment of an Evaluation Organisation to see that national planning is effectively implemented are matters of importance. But more important is a re-examination and re-patterning of our District units into a more viable form based on the irrigation basins to ensure the most scientific development. But the new Units must respond to popular control and the councils should reflect popular representation and decentralised block financing for delegated functions. But above all, the ultimate units must rest on our traditional villages re-vitalized by land reform and on new townlets based on industrial decentralisation. Here Local Councils village by village or town by town-with plenary powers to ensure proper social integration, economic justice and cultural development must be consciously adopted and actively fostered. Rationalising the pattern of all extension services, of educational facilities and welfare benefits like Hospitals and Social Service Schemes will follow, and imperceptibly but steadily the nation will be able in unity and in a new born sense of freedom and security, to lift itself into prosperity and happiness.

The B.J.B. can render invaluable service to the nation by placing before the 'mass mind' such revolutionary measures in a concrete form so that it reflects the true aims and aspirations of the people rather than those of a party whose one aim is to capture power. The B.J.B. is a non-political organisation which at the same time is a puritan force, an educative force, a corrective force and a constructive force. While being above party politics the B.J.B. can create the moral force necessary to influence the politics of the country in accordance with the noble and avowed ideals of the movement.

The Destination, the Method and the Means

People of today invariably ask the questions 'What is the destination?' Which way do you propose to go? How do you propose to go?' before they embark upon any venture of national magnitude. In other words, they need to be satisfied as to the ends in view, the means adopted and plan of action.

The First Precept of the B.J.B. (Buddhist National Movement)

In their first precept the members of the B.J.B. pledge themselves to dedicate their lives to the founding of a Buddhist Social Order in Sri Lanka, in which exploitation of man by man in any form, economic, social or political will be eliminated and where Justice, Equity and Welfare of All will be the salient features. Now the question arises as to what exactly is meant by a Buddhist Social Order? Firstly; the B.J.B., I believe, is making a serious attempt to find a very clear answer to this question. The Buddhist Philosophy of State, the form of Government and its instruments of power, the principles on which they have to function, the requirements and qualities of personnel who are most qualified to man them and the various other details on this subject are studied in great detail. I believe that an application of the principles of the Noble Eight Fold Path in a social sense, concepts of the Four cardinal principles (Chatussangraha Vastu), the Ten Buddhist Royal Virtues (Dasaraja Dharma) and the teachings in the Maha Parinibbana Sutra are being studied and orientated to formulate a concrete guide to this aspect of the foundation of a Buddhist Social Order.

Purity of Means

The misguided notion that a good end justifies bad means has brought about untold misery and sorrow to humanity. However promising the goals set before the community by organised political and religious groups might have been the means they have resorted to have disillusioned all right-thinking people. The B.J.B. on the other hand has right throughout its movement kept the tone of the purity of means. The members of the B.J.B. are bound to a strict code of self-discipline. No distinction has been allowed between the morals of their private lives and their social behaviour and public conduct. I am very hopeful of the healthy impact that this aspect of the movement will have upon the community. Particularly, it is bound to have a terrific impact on the political and administrative personnel of our country.

Our achievements in the field of founding a Buddhist Social Order in this country will be exactly in proportion to the purity of

our minds and hearts. Without inner purity we can never build up fearlessness. Our actions will be shrouded in indecision and result in confusion unless this great quality of purity of thought is cultivated. For Buddhists the motive force for developing this purity should spring from the very foundations of the Dhamma, namely, the three characteristics, Anicca (Impermanence), Dukkha (Sorrow) and Anatta (Soullessness). This is the reality, the Science, so ancient but at the same time so modern; so simple yet so profound. Realization of the fact that there is no 'doer' but only the 'deed', is of foremost importance. An organisation which has members who can drown their small and insignificant individual selves in the great sea of Balavegaya deeds can purify the entire social structure. The 'mass mind' needs only the clue and the values placed before them will certainly be upheld and lived up to.

The Programme

The programme is the third Great P. The 'mass mind' will not be content with, and cannot be kept on the alert for a long time on sentiments that come up as a result of anti-Buddhist or Anti-Nationalist forces. They have to be shown a constructive programme of work directed towards specific objectives in conformity with the broader and the ultimate goal of a Buddhist Social Order.

Firstly, this programme is formulated in such a way that every man is spurred on to non-violent and democratic social action with a determination to remove those unjust and discriminatory obstacles that stand against the progress of the nation on the ideals of a Buddhist Social Order. The remnants of a colonial past and the rudiments of its bankrupt civilization which were imposed upon us have to be removed unceremoniously. The sunken treasures of our cultural and religious past should be salvaged, polished by modern science and preserved for future generations. Neither the constitutional masterpiece of Sir Ivor Jennings nor the world language and culture of our Westernised privileged classes should be allowed to abuse our historical rights and impede the unique mission we have been historically obliged to carry on in this crucial period of history.

Secondly, this programme provides for every Buddhist to act individually and collectively in constructive activities in different fields, religious, economic and social. In the religious field priority is given to the study and practice of Dhamma to bring about a moral and spiritual reawakening, preserve and improve to ancient places of worship, to help to make the temples once again the true centres of community-worship and spiritual advancement, and to bring the Maha Sangha and laity closer to each other. In the economic field while supporting all progressive and socialist programmes of the State which are directed towards the elimination of economic exploitation of man by man, attention will be focussed on the maldistribution and improper utilization of the factors of production and the resulting failure to achieve the maximum welfare of one and all in our society whose population is increasing rapidly. The complete faith that is now placed in the efficacy of large scale organisations in the field of finance, commerce and industry, the excessive dependence that is placed on an import-export economy based on cash crops instead of on the more sound economy of self-sufficiency, and the lack of an integrated and coherent plan of national development giving every individual a place in its formulation and implementation, are being recognized by the B.J.B. as the major causes of our economic backwardness and inefficiency. While striving to put before the people and the governments in power the correctives for these ills the B.J.B. proposes to evoke the inherent strength the people have to solve their problems in planned community development programmes on the Shramadana Principles without depending entirely on State assistance.

In the social field an all-out campaign against all anti-religious and immoral practices, such as casteism, communalism, bribery and corruption, nepotism, production, distribution and sale of liquor whether with legal sanction or without, religious discrimination and anti-national and anti-social behaviourism, will be launched with all its might.

Thirdly, the B.J.B. programme will help the people to be educated in the utter futility of party politics in this age of science and an alternative system of party-less democracy where every

man can give his best to the community in the matter of self-government, will be placed before the people. In this instance the B.J.B. will only play the educative role rather than directly or indirectly participate in power and party politics.

Earnest Hope

This is how I see the Bauddha Jatika Balavegaya. To me, it has an appeal both to the Head and to the Heart. Through the dedicated group of people who belong to one of those great world religions, Buddhism, I see a universality of outlook because their Dhamma teaches that. I repeat that the Age of Science and Spirituality is round the corner and the call for human unity and breadth of vision has come. It is my earnest hope that the B.J.B. will gain strength from day to day and help purify our people in view of their daily lives hitherto divided, selfish, irreligious and unworthy of serving humanity, at one of the greatest crossroads in the history of mankind. I conclude with the inspiring lines I hear ringing in my mind—

“The world’s great age begins anew,
The golden years return
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn
Heaven smiles and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream,
Another ‘Lanka’ shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies
The splendour of its prime!”

This article was published by Sarvodaya Office, 493, Maradana Road, Colombo 10, on Sept. 1963.

Family Farm at Ruwanmaduwa

The basis for Sarvodaya activities in Vavuniya District was laid in January 8, 1961 as a result of a letter sent by Mr. N.H.M. Seneviratne, the Government Agent (GA) of the district. He had requested me to deliver a few speeches to the people at Vavuniya on Acharya Vinoba Bhave and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement we had launched following in his footsteps. I accepted the invitation.



Photo 288:
Mr U. B. Wijekoon

After delivering lectures at the Vavuniya Maha Vidyalaya to a Sinhala audience we held two successful seminars focusing on the development of the area. The Divisional Revenue Officer of the Sinhala division of Vavuniya was Mr. U.B. Wijekoon, who rose to become a Minister later. In the audience were delegates from village development societies, women's organizations, school teachers and even clergy.

In March, 1962, along with Mr. Wijekoon, I visited 30 Sinhala and Tamil villages in the district and imparted some knowledge to them. Later, we conceived the idea of a Sarvodaya Family Farm that would be home to Sinhala and Tamil youth. The District Revenue Officer's (DRO) office allotted to us a village to carry out this plan. It was Ruwanmaduwa, a traditional village spanning about 500 acres within the Vavuniya District. On May 10, 1962, the Government Agent there held a special land *kachcheri* (process of allocating land to the villagers) and allocat-

ed land to about 30 youths. This village, Ruwanmaduwa or Ratna Mandapa, has a history going as far back as the time of King Dutugemunu. Situated 21 miles from Vavuniya town, today it has become a kingdom for pachyderms, tigers and bears. Legend tells us that the village is of historical importance as the place where the *Kurundi Atuwa* was inscribed. Over time, the jungle covered over these ancient ruins. Human habitations are about 11 miles from the jungle. Our visit to the proposed farmland was marked by thrilling adventures.

The Sarvodaya group, led by the President Mr. Albert Wijegunewardane and myself, went by train to Vavuniya, enjoyed the hospitality of the DRO and drove to the jungle in a jeep along a gravel road. We passed a few hamlets here and there that were sparsely populated and after driving about 10 miles, reached Pirappanmaduwa. Here the dense jungle began. A farmer named Appuhamy volunteered as our guide. Beyond us was a small tank called Gala Pita Wewa. Overlooking this was a small village comprising 10 small huts. The headman was one Kadira, with a tall slim dark-skinned body, with a '*konde*' (long hair tied as a knot) and sporting a moustache. Racially, the people were Sinhalese but used Tamil as the medium of conversation. Kadira soon became a friend. Beyond the huts and the tea shop made out of mud and bamboo sticks rose the jungle replete with massive trees. Shrubbery ran underneath the canopy of trees. We used the paths that had been made to transport wood to the town.

Even at noon, darkness pervaded the area. Only the twitter of birds and trill of cicadas disturbed the calm. After going in about two miles, to the left, a rocky outcrop of about two acres rose for about 150 feet. The guide told us that this outcrop enshrined some ancient Buddhist ruins. The rock was known as 'Neela Kobo Gala' (the Rock of the Bird known as Neela or Blue Kobo). As we passed the place the creepers festooning the trees hung down like a set of swings. It was the season of drought but here and there in the crevices of the black rocks, water could be seen. A proliferation of these water-filled rocks created a series of pools which together with the emerald moss presented a fantastic spectacle. The tree canopies dropped flowers, pollen and dry

leaves adding to the beautiful tapestry on the ground. Jungle fowls cozily asleep in the foliage would now and then wake up and strut across the man-made footpaths. Birds like the *Neela Kobo* (Blue Kobo) and *Alu Kobo* (Ash Kobo) would vault from the earth and fly straight into the sky, and jackals would also run by now and then. Though elephants, tigers and bears were said to be rampant here, we did not meet any.

We trekked twelve miles and came to Ruwanmaduwa. Here we set eyes on the bund of a ruined and neglected tank. We decided that a stretch of 500 acres of land to the right would be suitable for a farm. It was then decided to procure it from the state, put up a building there for youth, and build a motorable road to it. The farm would start with 30 youth who would be chosen through an advertisement in the Sarvodaya newspaper which would be followed by an interview. After taking our meal packets there we returned to Vavuniya.

Two Youths Stranded

On May 4, 1962, while clearing the road off Pirappan Maduwa, two youths had strayed into the jungle from the group. We searched for them till late into the night, but could not find them. Those who came back again to the jungle emitted many hoots to which the lost youths finally responded with hoots. They were located in the trees.

Completing a Motorable Road

Within three weeks, a road was cut into the jungle which ran for 17 miles from Gala Pita Wewa through the forest to the tank bund at Ruwanmaduwa. Then, making use of the wood in the jungle, a 100x20 foot building was put up. Woven cadjan (dried coconut leaves) leaves were brought in by lorry and served to cover the roof. Walls were built with mud and sticks and clay was applied to the floor. The dark colour of the wall was turned to white by burning the bark of *kumbuk* (a kind of tree) trees and applying the ash.

The Necessary Equipment

The aluminum vessels needed to cook food, the crockery, cutlery etc. were all brought from Colombo. Even the axes and knives were brought. I got the bedding from an auction held by the army.

A carpenter who joined us from Aranayake made a fine set of swing beds using vines strung together. A small tree stood outside on which cups were hung. The stumps of trees served as chairs.



Photo 289:
Mr. W. D. Peetan

Well

On raised terrain by the tank, a well was dug and an 'andiya' (instrument to draw water from a deep well) installed. The water was cool and clear. The Government Agent of Vavuniya, Mr. Hussain, in fact used to come here during week-days and holidays for a bath. The man who constructed this well was one Babujee who had lived his life in Gandhigram of India and then joined us.

The Volleyball Ground

A volleyball court was built for the youth of the area. In August 1962, a group of us decided to spend our holidays in Vavuniya. Mr. M. A. Tillakaratne, Mr. D.T. Amerasekera, and Mr. William Kandage joined us. We went by train to Vavuniya, from



Photo 290:
Mr. D. T. Amarasekera

there went by jeep to Pirappanmaduwa and then walked. Two 'mallies' from the camp served as guides. Vegetables for a whole week were brought by them. The tomatoes they brought quenched our thirst along the way. Through the fearful dense forest, we walked for about three hours listening to the twitter of birds and the sounds of various other animals.

Arriving at the camp, we spread woolen blankets on the floor and had our

vegetarian lunch. To study the environment, we walked about that evening. The youth had cleared about 25 acres. We slept that night mindful of the wild beasts. All of us were unarmed. Not even the fear of animal attack could make the non-harming people of Sarvodaya take arms. The next day we helped in the clearing work. Mr. D. T. Amerasekera, then on the Henegama Maha Vidyalaya (Maha Vidyalaya means Senior School or College) staff and a member of the Executive Council, cut his foot while felling a tree. Having bandaged the bleeding foot with the towel he had wrapped around his head, we carried him to the camp and treated him with equipment from the first aid box. Venivel root (a kind of herb) was boiled and its water was given to him to drink. He had to rest for about a week.

Later, Mr. M. W. Karunananda, Head of Nalanda College, and Mr. Tillakaratne joined us. The Jeep they had come in had broken down in the jungle, message had been sent through a lorry driver to the town and another vehicle was obtained. All of us participated in the shramadana on the following day. In the jungle, we came across a beautiful Buddha statue. That day being a Full Moon day, we cleared the surrounding area and paid homage, after having constructed a temporary shrine around the statue.

In the evening, carrying flowers picked in the forest, clay lamps and coconut oil, we walked to the ancient ruined temple. Then we cleaned and washed the neglected altar and offered flowers. As Mr. Karunananda lit the oil lamps, a slight drizzle began. Those in the area considered the drizzle a miracle as they were undergoing a severe drought. Everyone chanted 'Saadhu! Saadhu! Saadhu!' After awhile we returned to the camp.

An Adventurous Trip

Having been alerted to the presence of a bund a mile away, about five of us went to see it.

As Mr. Karunananda and Mr. Kandage and I were on our way, an animal jumped down out of a tree closeby and started running. It was a tiger. We were rooted there in fear but he ran on and we continued walking ahead. After walking about 100 yards, we reached a curve in the road. We could hear the sound of hooves.

As we were wondering what sort of animal was approaching, we saw two wild buffaloes advancing. Covered with mud and advancing in a terrible mood, they instilled fear in us. There was no time to pray to the Triple Gem or to the gods. So we just stood there and watched. Another miracle happened! The beasts slowed their gait and stopped about 15 feet away from us and turned back. The mud from their bodies had splattered on our clothes making them look like batiks. Then we walked on.

On the bund, huge kumbuk trees rose up. In one tree, hunters had set up a mini hut. It was used by hunters in the village, we were told, who came there to kill the animals coming to drink water.

The water in the deep tank was almost black in colour. We stayed there for awhile and then returned to camp. A strong smell wafting from some flying insects known as paddy flies disturbed our sleep that night.

The next day at shramadana, a kind of fleas began biting our feet. The scars left by these bites still remain on my feet.

Escape From Tarantulas

One evening Messrs. Karunananda and Kandage were seated under a large palm tree in front of the building and chatting. In front of them was a stump of a cut Kolombu tree, left deliberately for sitting. Suddenly, we saw two large tarantulas falling from the tree onto it and dying instantly after their tummies got split from the fall. If we had sat on the Kolumbu stump, what could have happened to us can only be imagined.

Farm at Uruthrapuram off Kilinochchi

After a week at Ruwanmaduwa, we decided to visit Gandhi Nilayam Farm, run by the Gandhi Seva Society, in the Kilinochchi area.

The next day Messrs. Kandage, Karunananda, Tillakaratne and I came back to Vavuniya with Galapita Weva Appuhamy serving as our guide.

How We Quenched Our Thirst with Water from a Creeper

Inside the thick jungle, we felt quite thirsty after walking two miles. Appuhamy ran to a creeper covering a tree and cut a

piece of it. I went to watch. From the creeper oozed water! Appuhamy said it was ideal drinking water and I found it to be so. The others also followed me. The creepers were known as *Diya Labu Vel* and we were told that they were a traditional thirst quencher of the villagers.

We went to Pirappanmaduwa and then by jeep to Vavuniya. The next day we went to Paranthan near Kilinochchi.



Photo 291:
Ven. Siyambalagasweva
Wimalasara Thero

The Farm at Gandhi Nilayam

We went to the Uruthrapuram Farm run by Mr. S. K. Velayuthapillai, a gentleman who had dedicated his life to fulfilling the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. Those staying on the farm were homeless children of the area. A high standard of discipline was maintained there. We planted a few mango plants to commemorate our visit. Every year after that, a supply of the fruits from those trees was sent to Sarvodaya Headquarters.

The Closing Down of the Ruwanmaduwa Farm

The Ruwanmaduwa farm was running for about six months. Then the floods that happened in December 1962, created havoc in the area and wiped out the entire farm. The group living there got stranded. After a few days, carrying all their equipment, they returned to Vavuniya. For this reason, the farm intended to develop good relations between the Sinhalese and Tamil youths, had to be abandoned. Yet Ven. Siyambalagasweva Wimalasara Thero, Head of Bodhi Dakshinarama of Vavuniya and Member of the Sarvodaya Executive Council now carries on the good work we started there through the Wanni Sama Foundation.



Photo 292:
Mr. S. K. Velayuthapillai

Not only were food provisions to the camp cut off, but even communica-



Photo 293:
Ranjith Sandanayake, (back to camera) is a keen Sarvodaya
shramadana worker at Paranthan camp and other camps as well

tions with the town of Vavuniya, 22 miles away, became impossible. Though the Vavuniya Assistant Government Agent (AGA), Mr. Wijekoon exerted much energy to help, it was impossible to maintain the camp for more than 6 months. We envisaged a plan to repair the tank, by cutting a road via Mahakachchikudiya and bringing in supplies from there. But all that had to wait until the end of the rainy season. So we closed the camp.

At this time, in my professional life, Mr. Dharmasena Senanayake and I were exonerated of all charges against us. But no letter was sent to us asking us to resume our duties. We were asked to report for work on October 4, 1962. We were working on this camp at that troubled time.

I was fired with a zeal to establish youth camps in the areas between Mannar and Vavuniya around Trincomalee, between Padaviya and Batticaloa, between Wellawaya and Trincomalee and in or around the towns of Hambantota, Matara, Deniyaya and Kalutara. As an initial step, having solicited aid from the citizens of the area, we established youth committees from youth working in industries connected to agriculture.

I envisioned a climate in these camps which would be respectful of the two cultures and religions of the major population groups of the area, and in which the youth of the two com-

munities could live and grow up in an atmosphere of respect and rapport. Only by such living could the aggression in the country stop.

I invested a lot of energy trying to get those in power to accept this kind of training as a principle. But none took us seriously. "Ariyaratne has a lot of beneficial plans. But he lives in a dream world," they said, and that was all.

Once at a function in Mount Lavinia Hotel, a Secretary of the Education Ministry introduced me to Mr. Ralph Alles and quipped: "He is a man who does much good work. But he does them to extremes." Another big-wig imitated my youth project, but it was a flop.

Many Sarvodaya projects based on those youth communities still remain. But when people want to run me down, they use the failed camp at Ruwanmaduwa as the only example. Even Mr. Karunananda did so. But he looks at Sarvodaya work as individual experiences, while I look at it as a totality that could retrieve our society from ultimate destruction.

“Leave Them Alone”

After retirement, Sir John Kotelawala used to spend parts of the year alternately in England and in Sri Lanka. When he was a resident in the Kandawela Estate, Upali Senanayake and I would visit him now and then. One day, Mr. Senanayake took me and my whole family there. Sir John Kotelawala was addicted to routine. In fact even the fauna on his estate - the birds, the squirrels, the elephants, and the deer - were acclimatized to this routine.

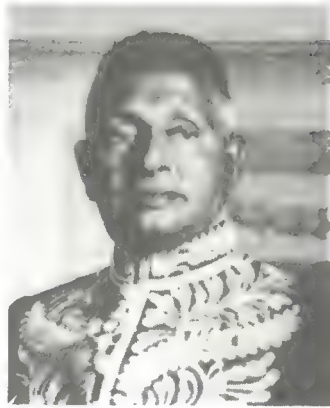


Photo 294:
Hon. Sir John Kotelawala

That day we came to the Kandawela estate during the time he allotted to animals. Sir John Kotelawala personally fed all the animals who were all patiently awaiting their turn. It was a compassionate sight that would be dear to any beast. My kids, Charika, Vinya and Jeevan enjoyed the spectacle, clapping and laughing. After the elephant had been fed by him, the gentleman turned to us and said ‘Now your turn.’

Then we too were treated with food and drink. After sending Neetha out to the garden with the children, he sat with the two of us and began talking. First, he criticized the rulers for not utilising my services. Then he said, “Ari, I had been wanting to relate a little story to you. Today I will do it.”

“In a certain country a young couple lived in a mud hut built on the periphery of a jungle. They loved each other very much.

They would get up in the morning, find something to eat, pack their lunches and enter the forest, carrying a knife, axe and coir rope. All day they chopped wood. Before coming back home they would always pay homage to the tree god by lighting a clay oil lamp. So life went on and they grew older day by day. But their happiness did not wane. They live very independently .

One day the tree God felt sorry for the couple. He mused: 'For 50 years these two have been lighting a lamp for me and worshipping me. What have I done for them in return?' He decided to give them a gift.

One day the couple finished their chores in the forest, had their lunch and then went on to light the lamp for their tree god. What did they see? In a 'watti' (basket) placed at the base of tree, were glimmering gem stones.

'Oh! Finally the god has rewarded us,' they exclaimed. And wrapping the gems in a cloth, they left their equipment and the bundles of wood there, and returned home. That night, the old woman cooked the most delicious dinner for her husband. The man dug a pit near the well and had a good bath. The wife came to the well to wash herself. The man took a mamoty and struck a blow on the woman's head and killed her, put her body into the pit, covered it with soil, washed himself and went home happily. Then he began to have his dinner. After a few mouthfuls he too died. The woman had added poison to the food, hoping to kill him so she could wed a younger man.'

"So, Ari, you can see the repercussions of making a couple prosperous who had been leading a very virtuous life." We all burst out laughing.

One the way back, I reflected on the story related by Sir John Kotelawala and jotted down this note in my diary.

"What Sarvodaya envisions is a society midway between affluence and poverty. Along with material development, spiritual development is necessary."

Visit to Israel

I was on full-pay leave from Nalanda between mid 1968 and September 17, 1969, to complete my degree at Vidyodaya University as an internal student. By that time, my friend, Mr. Piyasoma Medis and I had passed the intermediate examination, he as an internal student and I as an external student. Since we both took the same subjects, Piyasoma malli resided at my house and we went to classes together.

I went for two lectures in economics and felt that the subject matter was already known to me. What the lecturer did was to read out Prof. F. R. Jayasuriya's book on economics word by word. The students would then copy them. The Sinhala lectures were the only novel ones. The education lectures were delivered by Prof. L.G. Hewage, Mr. K. H. M. Sumathipala and Mr. Dharmasena Arampatta. Since they were known to me personally, I could not boycott their lectures. All other lectures I boycotted. Actually I did not attend these university lectures for more than 10 days. Since I had been reading many books on these subjects since my childhood, there was nothing new for me to learn from their lectures. Many were unaware that I was enrolled at the university.

There was an arrangement by which Piyasoma Malli used to sign for me at the lectures. He brought home all the notes for me. I went through some Final Exam papers too and prepared 30 questions from each subject. Then I would supply the answers and malli would note them down. Just before the examination, we decided to go through all the questions and answers. Piyasoma Malli was busy studying and I was busy carrying the Sarvodaya message around the country.



Photo 295:
With the people with whom I stayed

During this time, I read a booklet on community settlements in Israel. Known as kibbutz. I got an urge to try them out in our country. To study how the kibbutz worked, a visit to Israel was necessary. I met the then Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Shaul Ramanti and conveyed my wish. He provided me the necessary facilities to visit Israel. In fact, many in the Sarvodaya Bhoodan Movement in India had already made visits to Israel.

By the time I visited Israel, there were about 250 such farm-villages across the country known as Kibbutzim. About 250,000 members lived in them. Even the Prime Minister, the Speaker and four ministers were members of these Kibbutzim. Their private possessions were limited to two sets of clothing and the paraphernalia required to make a cup of tea. Everything else was communally owned and supplied by the settlement.

The first year of the Kibbutz Movement was 1911. The desert area bought by the Jewish Agency had been transformed into fertile land and the communes begun. Their economic basis was agriculture, but later some industries also got going. The communes drew Jews from all over the world while other affluent Jews invested money lavishly to develop them. Manual labour was the main work on these communes. It was after thousands of years that Jews were demarcating for themselves a country of their own. The Kibbutz Movement provided the foundation to build up this state for the sake of about 2,500,000 Jews in a land inhabited by about 80 million Arabs.

Photo 296:
Setting forth for work
(I am in the right
corner)



In addition to the Kibbutz villages were the ordinary villages known as Moshav and “in-between” villages known as Moshav Shitufi. I had many experiences and a great education in Israel, living for three weeks in a completely ‘communalised’ village known as Dorot, one week in a ‘Moshav Shitufi’ village, and two weeks in a Moshav village.

I stayed in a little wooden room. I obtained two pair of shorts and two vests from the general store, and had meals in the common cafeteria. I had to put in hard labour from 5 to 11 a.m. in the morning and from 3 to 5 p.m. in the evening. During this time, I drove tractors, picked apples and grapes, prepared beds for planting, watered plants via sprinklers, helped in the kitchen and dining room, and even taught our country’s history to school children of primary, middle and higher grades.

Since Israel is a very small country, I got the opportunity to wander all over it. I visited such places as Sodom and Gomorrah



Photo 297:
With friends in Dorot
village

Photo 298:
Near the Dead Sea



mentioned in the old Testament and also places such as Bethlehem and Jerusalem, connected to Jesus Christ's life.

Israel had no permanent army, but only army officers. Every citizen got military training. The citizens first trained in the student army known as Gadna and then in the youth force known as Nahal. When the sirens were blown suddenly twice a week, everybody began training exercises. In this way, they were well organized to face any attack within five minutes.

Their dedication, efficiency, scientific attitudes and unity simply astounded me. When one political party was conducting a meeting, members of other parties sat in the audience. The party system was not a divisive factor in the country.

Once they took me to see a 'waterfall' in a frontier area. It was only 9 inches wide. But through a pipe with a diameter of 5 metres, it was supplying water to the whole country. They had discovered a technology where that small amount of water would nourish all the plants.



Photo 299:
With a family in
Jerusalem



Photo 300:
Working in an apple
farm



Photo 301:
The couple who looked
after me



Photo 302:
With kids



Photo 303:
At Eilat, on the southernmost
border of the country

It was indeed wonderful to behold how they had transformed a completely arid desert into a fertile land with a soil layer of 3 to 4 inches thick, with fertile soil, grassland and shrubbery, and many large orchards replete with vegetables, oranges, apples and grapes.

What is happening in our country by contrast? A country enriched with the bounty of natural resources, we are turning it into an arid desert by the machinations of party politics. As I ruminated on this fact, anger and sorrow seeped into me.

I spent three months in Israel.

Photo 304:
In front of the room I
occupied in Dorot



A Cultural Invasion Into the Youth Conference

In 1965 that I was invited to deliver a lecture at the Kandy Teachers' Union. It was in English and was largely attended by teachers. In the audience was a white man. It was almost by accident that he was there.

At the end of the lecture he came and spoke to me. I do not remember his name.

"I am not trying to praise you. But your lecture was the best I have heard so far. Your ideas about the future direction of the world are very clear and very practical. Those ideas are really necessary for world society. I will be inviting you to the Voluntary Service Conference that will be held in Bangkok within a few days. It is organized by the International Secretariat for Voluntary Services and I am co-ordinating it. I am requesting you to deliver this same speech there."

I accepted the invitation and attended the conference. My national dress attracted the TV cameras like a magnet. Later, I heard that a judge in the Philippines who had seen me on TV had requested the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation in the Philippines to find out details about me. Meanwhile, Mr. K.V. Reddy, Asian Secretary of the World Assembly of Youth, came to visit and get an overview of our movement. During this time, a branch of the World Assembly of Youth called the Ceylon Assembly of Youth was established in our country. Having examined the Sarvodaya work, Mr. Reddy invited me to attend a conference in Singapore in 1967 organized by the World Youth



Photo 305:
With Mr. M. V. Rajasekaran

Conference. This Conference not only helped me to deepen my knowledge of the world, but facilitated links with youth groups in Asia, Africa, Europe and America. All participants at the conference desired to know about the development techniques adopted by Sarvodaya and asked me many questions.

In 1967, I went to Bangalore. I met Mr. M.V. Rajasekaran (Raja) there and was asked to deliver a lecture on "Rural Development and Youth Participation". This conference was organised by the World Assembly of Youth, a very active body at that time. The General Secretary of the World Assembly of Youth was Jyothi Shanker Singh, an Indian. The Deputy Secretary was Mr. Piet Dijkstra, a Dutch man. The Asian Secretary was Mr. K. V. Reddy, an Indian. Mr. Rajasekaran was an Executive Member and also held the President's post of the Indian Youth Council. During this conference, we stayed in the lodging house where the Legislative Assembly Members of Karnataka State resided. I remember that there were participants from Sri Lanka too. One was a Sarvodaya member sent by me to the Youth Assembly.

Since this lecture has already been published in my Collected Works, Volume One, it is superfluous to repeat it here. But I will highlight three factors I raised in it.

The first was cultural invasion. The organizational work of this conference was headed by a Bangalore group then aligned to the Indian Youth Council. Their organization was of a high standard. Yet the entertainment and hospitality aspect plus the cultural evenings seemed to be dominated by some rich entrepreneurs. One evening the dinner was held at the very sophisticated Bangalore International Hotel. The dinner was attended by about 300 people including a Central Cabinet Minister of the Indian State and several Ministers. There were many youth from South and East Asian countries. Since I had been invited in the capacity of a lecturer, I sat at a high table along with the Ministers.

When dinner was over, an announcement was made that a cultural pageant would be presented, highlighting special features of Indian culture. Soon, there on the stage, a young Chinese girl in long dress and circling a parasol over her head appeared. As the music gathered momentum, her long gown fell away. She did another bout of pirouetting after which off came her mini frock and jacket. Now she was in bikini and bra.

I had an urge to get up and go. But how could I do it alone without insulting the ministers? Everybody's eyes were glued to the dancer who now got rid of her bra too. Then throwing away the parasol too, she began dancing, exhibiting her breasts and wandering all over the hall. Now she was holding out her mammalian glands to the faces of the onlookers. I got up involuntarily and faced the ministers.

Then I said that I have come to India, land of the Buddha, Emperor Dharmasoka and Mahatma Gandhi. I further said that from the cultural pageant I had expected a profile of Indian culture and not such a shameful burlesque. I looked at my Sarvodaya acolyte. He looked amused and did not bother to join me. I left the hall alone. A woman came running up behind me shouting 'Brother! Brother!' of brown skin and decked in plain saree, she was a gem of a female. Because of her, the sentry at the entrance let me out. That lady's name is Padmasinee Asuri, a state officer working in the Indian Nutrition Programme. I always visit her when I go to Bangalore. That night she took me to my lodging.

I visited my Sarvodaya student the next morning. He was enjoying a liquor spree with some other young men, letting them have a taste of Ceylon arrack (liquor). I felt so sad and disgusted. He was of good Sinhala Buddhist parents but had become a sacrifice to western culture. Later, he developed a romance with a girl from Madras. It took years for us to retrieve him from the abyss. Today he is in a very high post and is a very good young person.



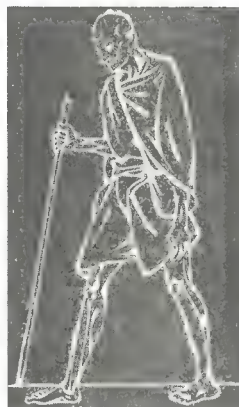
Photo 306:
Mr. Piet Dijkstra

It was this conference that paved the way for me to attend a European Conference to give the Sarvodaya message. Mr. Piet Dijkstra, a Dutchman, was the elder who appealed to me most in this seminar. On the way to the conference we drafted a scheme to establish libraries in a hundred villages with the aid of the World Assembly of Youth in Brussels and using a UNESCO gift coupon scheme. As the Sarvodaya Movement spread its tentacles in Europe, the friendship between Piet and me grew closer.

The third result accrued from this conference was my establishing a very strong rapport with the World Assembly of Youth and with Mr. M.V. Rajasekaran, an Executive Member of this Assembly.

Gandhi Centenary Celebrations

Gandhi Centenary Celebrations were scheduled to be held at Sarvodaya on October 2, 1969. From 1967, we began making arrangements to hold this celebration in a notable way. First, we held several meetings in the Senate Square Office of Mr. A. Ratnayake, President of the Senate. Then a public meeting at Borella YMBA followed. A committee to run the celebrations was nominated, and the following were appointed office-bearers:



- Chief Advisor - Governor General His Excellency William Gopallawa.
- Deputy Advisors - Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister Mr. Dudley Senanayake
Opposition Leader Hon. Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike
- President - Senate Chairman Hon. Mr. A Ratnayake.
- Chief Secretaries - Messrs. A. T. Ariyaratne, Lalith Hewawitharana, Albert Edirisinghe and Palitha Weerasinghe
- Deputy Secretaries- Messrs M. A. Tilakeratne, S.K. Tambipillai and Piyasoma Medis.
- Treasurers - Messrs. Thomas Amarasuriya, J. L. Ganguli and C.B. Mody.

The meeting to install this National Committee was organized jointly by the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, the Gandhi Sewa

Society, the Mahabodhi Society and the Indo-Lanka Society. Mr. M. A. Tillakaratne invited Mr. A. Ratnayake to chair the meeting. After observing two minutes of silence in memory of Mahatma Gandhi, Mr. A. Ratnayake spoke. He spoken about the personality of Gandhi, and eulogized the role played by this great savior in inspiring and directing not only 40 million Indians towards independence but also people in countries such as Pakistan, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, states of Africa and South America. In this context, Mr. Ratnayake solicited the aid of everyone there to hold celebrations on a grand scale.

The Executive Council accepted a motion to hold these celebrations brought forward by Mr. Jabir A. Cader, Mayor of Colombo. This motion was seconded by Mr. S. Somasunderam. The following personnel addressed the gathering: Indian Ambassador Shri Y. D. Gandevia, Ven. Hedigalle Pannatissa Thero. Ven. Hettimulle Vajira Buddhhi Thero, Mudliyar S. Sinnathamby, and Dr. M.C.M. Kaleel. Dr. N.M. Perera and Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike also spoke and pledged their full support to this cause. The final lectures were delivered by Mr. Abdul Azeez and myself.

The National Integration Committee became activated under the aegis of Prof. G. P. Malalasekera and with Mr. M. A. Tillakaratne and Mr. S.K. Velayuthapillai as Secretaries. Prof. Ven. Bambarande Siri Seevali Thero, Prof. K. N. Jayatillaka and Prof. O.



Photo 307:

The crowd headed by national leaders who attended the Centenary Celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi observing pansil. In front: Governor-General Hon. William Gopallawa and Hon. A Ratnayake, in the foreground: Hon. E.L. Senanayake, Hon. J.R. Jayewardene and others.

Photo 308:
Exhibiting episodes
of Mahatma
Gandhi's life



H. De S. Wijesekera were Committee Members. The Gramodaya Committees were composed of Messrs. R.A. Wijegunewardene, D. S. Senanayake, Mudaliyar S. Sinnathamby, Upali Senanayake, S. Srinivasan and Mrs. Sita Rajasuriya.

The Education Committee was composed of Mr. Handy Perinpanayagam, Prof. L.G. Hewage, Mr. S.K. Tambipillai and Mr. Piyasoma Medis. Mr. D.B. Ellepola and Mr. S. Sivasubramaniam led the Social Development Committee while the members of the Resources Committee were Mr. Albert Edirisinghe, Mr. C. Nadesan, Mr. R.A. Nadesan, Mr. J.L. Ganguli and Mr. C. B. Mendis. All the Committees performed their duties as well as they could. I signed all documents.

On an invitation by Hon. PM Mr. Dudley Senanayake on September 11, 1968, 167 persons connected to the Gandhi Centenary Celebrations were hosted by Rt. Hon. Mr. William Gopallawa at the President's House. The proposed program was endorsed by him on that day.

The work allotted to and accepted by Sarvodaya was as follows:

1. To continue the ongoing 100 village development programme
2. To train about 500 youth (9 male and female) for civic leadership.
3. To publish Mahatma Gandhi literature.
4. To disseminate Sarvodaya ideals via public lectures, film shows, newspaper articles, school programmes, radio programme, essays, drama, song and competitions.

Photo 309:
Conducting guests to
the Nedalagamuwa
Sarvodaya
Conference: l to r:
myself, Dr. Bhimsen
Sachar (Indian High
Commissioner), Dr.
R. R. Divakar
(Chairman, Gandhi
Peace Foundation)



5. To establish Sarvodaya Headquarters and install a Gandhi Memorial Hall and Peace Library.
6. To build a Sarvodaya Ashram and Co-operative Farm.

To the best of our ability, we achieved a good percentage of the work undertaken by us. And from October 2, 1968 to January 30, 1970 we successfully carried out the Gandhi Centenary programme.

On December 21, 1968, Mr. William Kandage, Mr. M. A. Tillakaratne and I went to Jaffna to organize Gandhi Centenary Celebrations in Jaffna. The celebrations were headed by the Government Agent of Jaffna (GA) Mr. S.P. Pieterz. Most of the leaders in Jaffna were present. I promised at the meeting to bring Shri Jayaprakash Narayan to Jaffna after he arrived on January 9, 1969.

The lectures held during these celebrations on "The Life and Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi" at the Royal College Hall, Nalanda College Hall and YMBA Halls in Borella and Fort, proved extremely successful. Lectures were delivered by several prominent individuals including Prof. K. N. Jayatileke, Dr. N. M. Perera, Prof. Dharmasena Arampatta, Hon. J. R. Jayewardene, Hon. Phillip Gunawardena, Messrs. K. Nadesan, Mr. A. Tillakaratne and Mr. K. K. Ramachandran.



Photo 310:
Dr. N. M. Perera

Education and Civic Progress

Towards the end of 1961. Prof. J.E. Jayasuriya, head of the Education Faculty at Peradeniya University, invited me to deliver a lecture to Post-Graduate students of education. When I was a student of Maharagama Government Training College (GTC), I remember Prof. J.E. Jayasuriya delivering a lecture at the Social Services League. That day he elaborated on the Sarvodaya Movement in India, on the Bhoodan and Shramadana Movement and on Acharya Vinoba Bhave's work. But until 1958, when I actually got down to practical work in this sphere, the depth of the content of Prof. Jayasuriya's speech eluded me.



Photo 311:
Prof. J. E. Jayasuriya

The lecture topic allotted to me was "Linking the School with the Community." I always based the academic content of my speeches on my experiences. Though I have spoken in many august assemblies all over the world, rarely do I prepare these speeches. I followed the same pattern with regard to this lecture. The lecture and discussion went on for about three hours, at the end of which the professor took me to his room and asked me for the copy of my speech. I had to admit that I did not prepare a written speech and that I had given my speech impromptu. That surprised him. When I told him that I had not received my education in a university, he was more amazed. Dr. Swarna Jayaweera was also there with him. Then he told me that since nobody else had

written on this topic that I should write down what I had said and give it to him. I told him that I could not remember anything I had said.

Now Dr. Swarna Jayaweera came to my rescue and offered the notes she had jotted down. Based on these notes, I sat at the typewriter in Prof. Jayasuriya's room and typed the whole speech. That night I stayed at Prof. Jayasuriya's house. Once the typed speech was handed over to him, he instructed Dr. Swarna Jayaweera to publish it in the National Education Society Journal. Dr. Swarna Jayaweera was then the editor of this magazine.



Photo 312:
Dr. Swarna Jayaweera

The Editorial Board was composed of Prof. J.E. Jayasuriya, Mr. K. Nesiah, Mrs. Hilda Peiris (Lecturer) and Dr. Kenneth De Lanerolle, Head of Kingswood College.

My speech was published in Volume 11 No. 1 of the 1961 March issue of the National Education Society (NES) Journal.

Do Not Develop Stomach Ailments

Both gates at Temple Trees were open. One Police Constable at the gate took the trouble to salute us, perhaps because Mr. Upali Senanayake's Hillman car was a regular sight. We stopped the car in the portico. On the verandah as we went in was the Prime Minister sprawled on a lounge chair smoking his pipe. No one else was in sight.

The time was about 12 noon, but I cannot remember the date. The year was 1968. Unlike today, neither the mansion of Temple Trees nor the surrounding garden carried an aura of opulence. It was just like any other ancient walauwa (mansion) one comes across in this country. Yet the furniture which was vintage, and more than any other external veneer, gave a stately atmosphere to the mansion. No armed sentinel stood outside or inside. It was an ideal placid atmosphere for the very humble Prime Minister to sit and focus his thoughts on the country's issues.

"Come, come, Ari! It's nice to see you. Sit down. Sit down," said the Prime Minister, taking out his pipe and inviting us to sit. Then he turned to his cousin Mr. Upali Senanayake and asked whether we had had our meals. When a negative reply was given, he ordered a servant to go to the Galle Face Hotel with the driver and bring back eight packets of lunch. Then he questioned us on



Photo 313:
Hon. Mr. Dudley Senanayake

the present condition of Sarvodaya and the meeting program. That unleashed a torrential outpouring of words from Mr. Upali Senanayake on the Sarvodaya Movement, the weeding programme and the paddy transplanting programme. Soon another vehicle stopped at the mansion's portals, and Maha Kalu Sinhalaya, another huge, dark coloured gentleman emerged. These three Senanayakes looked like a trio of the Dasa Maha Yodayas (Ten Great Giants) of our folk lore. The new comer was Mr.



Photo 314:
Mr. R. G. Senanayake

R.G. Senanayake. Listening to these cousin brothers arguing with each other and bantering with each other provided me great amusement.

I related a story to Upali and R.G. about how I had invited Mr. Dudley Senanayake, when he was out of politics, to officiate at the opening of a new building I had built as a maiden venture in my early social service career.

"I did not heed the advice given by Ari then. He wanted me to lead a campaign for a partyless people's political system. Because of my bad luck, I entered politics" I still remember Mr. Dudley Senanayake's speech at that early function.

The lunch packets were brought and left on the table. Four plates were kept. "I am famished," said Mr. Dudley Senanayake and soon four of us began eating. Only bowls for washing our fingers and glasses of water and serviettes were kept on the table. No forks and spoons. No fussing servants around. My respect for the Prime Minister increased, observing his simple ways.

I could not eat even one third of the large lunch packet. Mr. Dudley Senanayake had finished his first packet and was wading into his second. I could not restrain myself.

"Sir, it's not good to eat so much rice."

"Don't be mad, Ari. I get a chance to have such a meal very rarely. And when I do get the chance I make up for all the other times," he replied.

Then Mr. R.G. Senanayake began speaking. "Though Ari does not do politics, he does a lot of social service work. I would also like to give him some advice. You would have read in the newspaper about the stomach ailment of Dudley-ayya and myself. That's all correct news. In fact, the two of us will one day die due to this ailment. That is because politics prevent us from having our meals at regular times. This is very bad for one's health. At least one meal out of the three main meals a day should be had at a regular time."

Since that meeting, wherever I am in the world, I make it a habit to have my afternoon meal between 12.30 and 1.00 p.m.

The Beginning of Shanthi Sena (Peace Brigade)

There are a multitude of service institutions within the main Sarvodaya matrix. One is the Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena (Peace Brigade). This is the story of how it began.

Two great mentors of India were visiting us from April to June 1962. One was Mr. E. W. Ariyanayagam, a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi who had led the Indian Liberation Movement. The other was his spouse, Srimathi Asha Devi, a niece of Rabindranath Tagore. After India's



Photo 315: Srimathi Asha Devi

achievement of independence, it was to Mr. Ariyanayagam that Mahatma Gandhi entrusted the development of the Wardha Scheme of Education. He carried this out so successfully that his name was soon among the great educationalists of the world. His birth place was Vaddukkottai near Jaffna.

On my invitation, this pair visited Sri Lanka and delivered many lectures to Sarvodaya villages. They went to Mr. Ariyanayagam's birth village, too.

On May 13, 1962, Mrs. Asha Devi Ariyanayagam made a speech on 'Shanthi Sena' in my House Under the Breadfruit Tree, at the end of which a decision was taken to establish our own Shanthi Sena. Four objectives were to serve as our beacon in this movement. They were:

Photo 316:
Asha Devi
addressing
Sarvodaya workers.
From l to r Nalanda
Principal,
Mr.K.M.W.Kuruppu, I,
Mr.Ariyanayagam,
Mrs Somie Meegama
and
Ms. Ramachandran



1. To select, train and maintain a group of 'Shanthi Sena' workers who would voluntarily offer their services to resolve conflicts that would arise in any part of the country.
2. To offer their services as a peace keeping body to humanity transcending all barriers of caste, creed, religion etc.
3. To assist the World Peace Brigade in every way.
4. To educate the public in ways that could eradicate violence in a non-violent way.

We formulated these principles as the basis for our movement:

1. What we should envision finally is a Kalyana Mitra Sathpurusha or well-meaning society that has everybody's welfare at heart.
2. All Shanthi Sena activities would be based on Truth, Non-violence and Selflessness.
3. Peace would be ensured through non-violent processes.

We also endorsed the following litany of pledges:

- a. I place my trust in non-violence as the one and only way of resolving conflicts that arise between people.
- b. I will always strive for a simple way of living. What I need for this simple life, I will earn through my own labour. I will not try to accumulate other than what suffices for the satiation of my needs and the needs of my dependents.
- c. I will not judge people as high or low based on the narrow premises of caste, race, nationality, class, colour, religion or such classifications.

- d. I will not indulge directly or indirectly in party politics or power-hungry politics.
- e. I will sacrifice my life to maintain national peace and world peace.
- f. During times of peace, I will indulge in Praja Seva (community service) activities.

The first Shanthi Sena training camp was held during the August vacation of 1962 at Ruwan Maduwa Family Farm. The first Shanthi Sena camp was held at Gandhi Nilayam in Uruthirapuram off Kilinochchi. The second, third, fourth and fifth camps were held respectively at the Wilgam Temple in Trincomalee in the Kegalle District, in the Sabaragamuwa District, in Jaffna and in Nedalagamuwa. In each of these camps, a group consisting of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims participated together.

Another fact needs to be mentioned. A few years later, Mr. Ariyanayagam came to visit me in Colombo but failing to meet me, went on to Jaffna. Seated on the veranda of his house he had asked his wife, Asha Devi, to bring a glass of water. He had drunk it, but the next time Asha Devi came back to the verandah he was dead in the chair. She had performed his funeral rites at Vaddukkottai the same day and went back to India. I only came to know about the tragedy after telegraphic condolences on his death from the President of India and other leaders came to my address.

Later Asha Devi wrote to me that her husband's last topic of conversation with her was the Sarvodaya Movement of Sri Lanka and the need to help me. She informed that she would be coming back to Sri Lanka to help me. But she fell ill and soon after she also left the world.



Photo 317:
Audience listening to a
speech Asha Devi
delivered at Vavuniya

Camp at Thiruketheeswaram

During Christmas of 1967, a fierce storm and tidal wave had wreaked havoc in the Mannar terrain, collapsing houses and public buildings, killing cattle and doing damage to agricultural crops. State intervention was necessary to ameliorate these conditions.

Three Permanent Secretaries who had gotten together at the National Services office of the Land Development Department at Alston Place were in a quandary as the main officers were on leave. Mr. Sri Kantha, one of the trio, made the suggestion to solicit my help. Soon I was contacted.

I went there and asked them to relay a message over the radio for all Sarvodaya workers to come to Maradana. Soon, about 100 of them congregated while aid in the form of food and clothing began to arrive at my house as well.

On Christmas day, with seven lorries loaded with food and a water bowser, we went to Mannar. A special jeep was given to me to use. There were 50 voluntary workers including students of Vidyodaya University. I had been delegated temporary powers by the Land Development Department to sign railway warrants and vouchers. Later a special officer Mr. Lionel Silva empowered with these duties was sent to Talaimannar. Many people tried to stop us along the way but I led the aid group straight to the high ground on which the kovil of Thiruketheeswaram stood.

Having stopped the vehicle, I went to the kovil. The roof had been blown away and destroyed. As I entered the kovil an elderly gentleman clad in a vetti was praying to the gods. He stood up and came to me.



Photo 318:
Thiruketheeswaram Kovil

He held my hands and said, “Ariyaratne! I was praying to the gods to send you here and now you have come. Now I entrust everything to you. Come with me.”

I went into the kovil, worshiped the Buddha first, then endowed merit on the gods and implored them to bless me to perform my services to the people to the best of my ability. Then went into the ashram of Sir Kandiah Vaithiyanathan.

Sir Kandiah Vaithiyanathan was the chief guardian of the Thiruketheeswaram Kovil. I was requested to stay in a part of his own quarters and handed over the large storehouse of rice and floor.

I examined the camp grounds and organized the voluntary workers and villagers for action. One group was directed to repair the pond in the vicinity and conserve the pure water therein. Another was instructed to collect all the strewn dead bodies of the

animals and bury them, while another was sent to collect the equipment required to temporarily repair the roof of the kovil and clean up the premises. Still another group was asked to prepare tea and dinner while steps were taken to organize the *waadi* (a small hut) where all the workers were to stay.

Then we turned the sacred Thiruketheeswaram grounds into a Sarvodaya Shramadana camp. Soon our force was strengthened by several other Sarvodaya groups wending their way to Mannar from all parts of the island. Every day about 300 people joined us.

Several thrilling episodes were enacted here.

One day a gentleman, very fluent in English, came with the Commander of the Mannar Army Camp. He introduced himself as a superintendent of an estate at Badulla and an old Thomian. He said he had come in response to my newspaper appeal for Sarvodaya workers. I had no reason to doubt him and let him stay in my kuti.

In the meantime, through the CARE Organization, sacks of flour began flowing in. Day and night the workers, including Weeratunga malli and I unloaded these bags.

One day, I noticed a firearm in the suitcase of Mr. Weerakoon, the newcomer. Without telling anybody, I went to Anuradhapura, called the Deputy Inspector General of Police Mr. T.B. Werapitiya and asked him to find out about Mr. Weerakoon. I also told Weeratunga malli to be on guard around him. Then I went to Colombo Police Headquarters and the next afternoon went back to Mannar, having learned all details about him. Then I took the man inside and very cordially requested him to tell me what reasons motivated him to come here.

He started to talk in a roundabout way about my social service but I said that I knew everything about him. Then he confessed that he actually came to get a forged cheque cashed from Sir Kandiah Vaithiyathan, but having observed all that was going on, he changed his mind. He said that the only bad thing he had done so far was to sell 25 empty sacks and earn 25 rupees. I learned from this incident that a good environment can even change a person with bad intentions. I handed him 25 rupees and

since he was required to report to the Police weekly, drove him to Anuradhapura in my jeep.

Three days after our arrival in Mannar, a young Government Agent (GA) in European costume visited us. We were in the process of building temporary abodes for the homeless.

Since most of our labour force comprised Vidyodaya students, the village began to be called Vidyodaya Gramam. The GA questioned me about whether I had checked the homeless people's citizenship, before building houses for them. I replied that we had only come to help them in distress, not to deal with such issues as citizenship.

Our camp functioned for three months. After normal village life resumed, we returned home.

Photo 319:
Making preparations for a camp



Photo 319.1:
Cadjun leaves from down South



Photo 319.2:
Preparing meals

The 100 Village Re-Awakening Scheme

It was the 100 Village Re-Awakening Scheme that was selected by Sarvodaya as its first implementation program to honor the Gandhi Centenary Celebrations. In 1967, the National Committee endorsed this and this was also confirmed in the 6th Annual Conference of Sarvodaya held at Nedalagamuwa.

Among those who attended this Sarvodaya conference from India were Dr. R. R. Divakar, a Sarvodaya luminary of India, Sri Devendra Kumar Gupta, Secretary of the Indian Gandhi Centenary Celebration Committee, Shri T.K.

Mahadevan, Editor of Gandhi Marg, Sri Jawaharlal Jain, Member of Kadi and Rural Industries Commission, Mr. S.R. Subramaniam, Secretary of Bhoodan Committee in Madras State and Dr. Bhimsen Sachar, the Indian High Commissioner.

Through the radio and newspapers, I made a plea to the general public to bring attention to our impoverished villages. A list of such villages was compiled by December 1966, basic surveys were completed, and training given to youths from these villages. On January 1, 1967, we officially launched the 100 Village Re-Awakening Scheme.



Photo 320:
Charika welcoming
Mr. T. K. Mahadevan,
Editor of Gandhi Marga
magazine



We had no material resources with which to start our work. What we did first was to hold a Shramadana Camp in each village to inculcate in the mind of the villagers that if they would work in a united way, a large potential for development lay within them. The basic research and the procedures for progress could be achieved through Gramodaya (Village Re-Awakening) and Grama Swarajaya (Self-governance in villages). Among those who helped me in this venture were Mr. Alex Tennekoon and Mr. L.P. Medis.

Later, it was this program that expanded into the 10,000 Village Re-Awakening Scheme.



Photo 321:
The group
headed by
Mudaliyar
Sinnatamby who
came over from
Jaffna to attend
the seminar

The Sri Lankan Tour of Shri Jayaprakash Narayan

By this time, leading Sarvodaya luminaries in India such as Shri E. W. Ariyanayagam, Shrimathi Asha Devi Ariyanayagam, Shri Devendra Kumar Gupta, Shri Radakrishna, Dr. R. R. Divakar, and Dr. Bhimsen Sachar had come to Sri Lanka and had given their blessings to our Sarvodaya work. But my ultimate desire was somehow to bring Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Shri Jayaprakash Narayan to Sri Lanka.

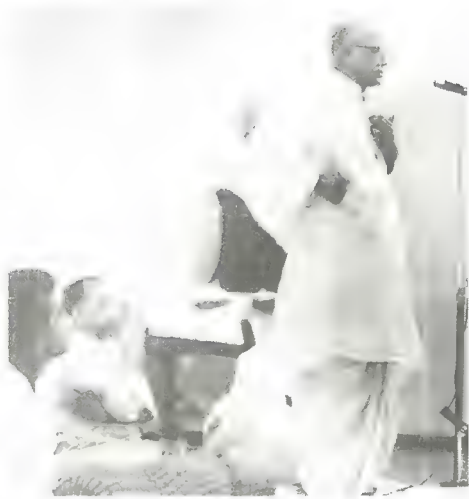


Photo 322:
Shri Jayaprakash Narayan

When I first met Acharya Vinoba, I sensed that he was not prepared to travel outside of India. So I strived to get Shri Narayan. Unexpectedly, he informed me that he would be attending a meeting of the Quaker Organization in Sri Lanka. Utilising this opportunity, I got him to visit us in the House Under the Breadfruit Tree, and that served as the venue for him to meet Hon. Phillip Gunawardena, Hon. Dr. N.M. Perera, Mr. Hector Abeywardena and several others who were his friends. I got to know Shri Narayan and his wife Prabhavati personally at this time.

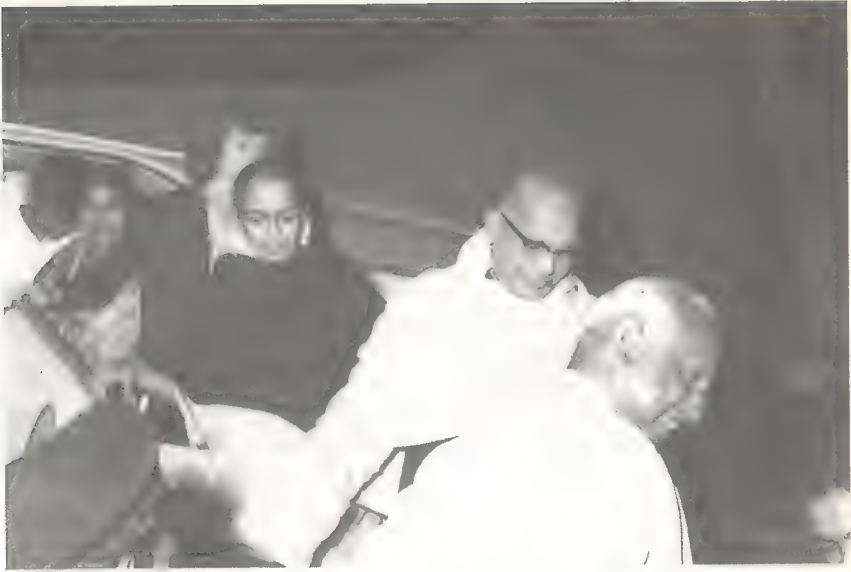


Photo 322.1:
Welcoming Shri Jayaprakash Narayan and Shrimati Prabhavati Devi at Ratmalana Airport



Photo 322.2:
Being welcomed by Mr. Gandevia, High Commissioner for India, and
Mr. Tripathi, Cultural Affairs Secretary

Photo 322.3:
With
Ven. Dr. Walpola
Rahula



Later when I went to India, I met him at the Gandhi Peace Foundation and in his ashram in Kuwam near Patna in Bihar and invited him to visit Sri Lanka in January 1969.

My intention was to utilize his visit to prevent the escalation of the ethnic conflict now gaining ground. So during the 11 days between January 2, 1969 and January 13th of 1969, I made a plan to take him all over the island, especially to the north and to the hill country and got this plan approved by the National Committee.

On the full-moon day of January 2, 1969, Shri Jayaprakash Narayan and his wife Shrimati Prabhavati Devi arrived at Ratmalana Airport. The National Committee headed by Mr. Ratnayake received them warmly. Then we went straight to the Ramakrishna Mission at Wellawatte, and spent the night at Mr. A. Ratnayake's house.

On the 3rd, we met Governor-General His Excellency William Gopallawa at the President's House and the Prime Minister Hon. Dudley Senanayake at Woodlands. Then we went to the Cooperative Mansion at Sandalankawa on an invitation by Mr. Vincent Subasinghe where Shri Narayan made a speech.

We went on to Dharmaraja Pirivena in Nedalagamuwa where he delivered another lecture to about 200 Sarvodaya workers from the areas of Nedalagamuwa and Pannala. For lunch, we went to my wife Neetha's house in Kuliyaipitiya. At about 3.00 pm., we visited the village of Pubbhiliya, attended several functions, had dinner and went to Kandy where we spent the night at

the official residence of the Kandy Government Agent , Mr. W. J. Fernando. On the 4th we went to Grand Hotel in Nuwara Eliya where a huge procession had been organized. A public meeting was held at the Town Hall and here Shri Narayan made a brilliant speech on Ahimsa (non-violence) and National Unity. After having lunch at Grand Hotel, we went on to the town of Agradatana. Thousands had gathered to welcome the leader from India. There again he made a speech. I also spoke at all these meetings. We spent the night at Grand Hotel.



Photo 322.4:
With labour leader Mr. Abdul Azeez

Mr. S. Thondaman chaired the Nuwara-Eliya meeting and Mr. Abdul Azeez chaired the Agradatana meeting.

On the 5th, we went to Badulla. In the morning, a massive public meeting was held at Senanayake Grounds and after taking lunch at Hapugahawatte Bungalow off Diyatalawa, we held our next meeting at Bandarawela Town Hall. Then we came back again to stay at Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya.

On the 6th, we participated in public meetings held at Nanu Oya, Talawakele, Hatton, Nawalapitiya and Maddegoda. We spent the night at Maddegoda. On the 7th, after participation in a meeting at Madolkale, we went to worship the Sacred Relics in the Temple of the Tooth at Kandy, visited the Maha Nayakes and again took part in a public meeting at the Kandy Town Hall. The night was spent in the Government Agent's bungalow.

On the 8th, we proceeded to Anuradhapura where we had lunch at King's Lodge, and then paid homage at Sri Maha Bodhi, Ruwanweliseya, Thuparama and other sacred places. A multitude had gathered at Anuradhapura Central College to hear Shri Narayan. We went on to Uruthirapuram and spent the night in Gandhi Nilayam Ashram.

Photo 322.5:
Touring Uruthrapuram



On the 9th, we toured Aknarayankulam, Gandhi Gram, Dharmapuram and Kasturba Home and by 2.00 pm. reached King's House in Jaffna. There we were received by the District Committee and then took part in a meeting held at the Cooperative Hall in Jaffna and at a seminar held in the Public Library. Thousands were audience to these gatherings.

At the final meeting, the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Jaffna conveyed a very tragic piece of news to me. I was half asleep when he came and I was dreaming that my vehicle was on fire. I had just woken up and told Mr. Selvanayagam that our vehicle had met with an accident. He told me, "Don't be crazy!" Just then the SP gave me the news that Mr. Amrat Amalian and others who had gone to Colombo in our new Mitsubhishi Jeep had met with a grave accident at Rambewa off Medawachchiya.



Photo 322.6:
At a meeting in Hatton

Photo 322.7:
Near the Samadhi Statue
in Anuradhapura



Photo 322.8:
Near the Kuttam Ponds

Photo 322.9:
At Isurumuniya



Photo 322.10:
It was in this vehicle
driven by me that
Jayaprakash Narayan and
his wife travelled



I made arrangements for Shri Narayan to enplane to Colombo the next day and having borrowed the new Cambridge car of Mr. Selvanayagam, drove to the scene of the accident. I drove the vehicle myself as no driver was available. I don't recall who accompanied me.

By about 2.00 a.m. I was in Rambewa where, at a boutique, I learned that the injured had been taken to Anuradhapura hospital by the police. I drove straight to the police station. There the Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), Mr. Wimalasena de Silva, a school-mate of mine from Mahinda College, had attended to everything. Mr. Amrat Amalian was a fast driver. I had instructed him to drive slowly yet he had been driving speedily. At the Rambewa curve the vehicle had skidded, circled thrice and then toppled. The vehicle was reduced to a mass of iron and I could not bring myself to look at it. I went straight to Anuradhapura hospital with the ASP.



Photo 322.11:
ASP Mr. S.B. Wimalasena
de Silva

Two were still unconscious. One was Weeratunge malli. The other was Bulathsinhala Harendra Jayasinghe malli. The only one conscious was Amrat Amalian malli. Seeing me, he too fainted.

On the advice of the doctors, I made all arrangements to remove them and take them to Colombo General Hospital. On the 10th, I returned to Colombo. Meanwhile Shri Jayaprakash Narayan had spent the day

Photo 322.12:
At Uruthrapuram with
Mr. Velauthapillai and
Mudaliyar Sinnatamby



Photo 322.13:
At Kelaniya temple with
Ven. Talewela Vijitha
Dhammarakkitha Nayaka
Thero

addressing youth groups, women's groups, co-operative members, teachers and members of rural development societies. He had even visited several villages.

On the 11th Shri Narayan and his wife flew back to Ratmalana. Lunch was prepared for them by Hon. Phillip Gunawardena. Then Shri Narayan met the Quaker members, the Dematagoda Muslim Society members and the Sarvodaya members and then went over to the YMBA.



Photo 322.14:
Mr. Amrat Amalian



Photo 322.15:
With Hon. Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike

He spent the 12th visiting the Kelaniya Temple, having lunch with the Gandhi Centenary Celebration Committee and the Indo-Lanka Society, attended a reception given by the Mayor and attended meetings and press conferences held at Saraswathy Hall and Vivekananda Hall. I also got him to meet Hon. Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike at Rosmead Place. On the 13th, Shri Jayaprakash Narayan and his wife left for their country from Ratmalana Airport. A letter he sent me from India dated on February 7, 1969 is reproduced here.

Jayaprakash Narayan
Permanent Address:
KADAM KUAN, PATNA - 3
BIHAR, INDIA

Telephone: 25547
Camp: Sarvodaya Ashram
Sokhodeora
February 7, 1969

Dear Ariyaratne:

I am sorry for not having written to you immediately after returning. As soon as I came back I had to fulfill a number of crowded engagements after which I fell ill from which I am still recovering. I am writing this from my Ashram where I have retreated for quiet and rest.

Even though I had met you at the time when I went to Ceylon for the Quaker Seminar, it was indeed a very great pleasure to know you so intimately during my last Gandhi Centenary tour. I really wish there were some workers like you in the movement here. There is no Vinoba in Ceylon and yet you and your young friends have been able to build up such a fine movement which holds so much promise for the future.

Please do not think I am being formal when I send you my and my wife's most sincere thanks for all that you did for us in Ceylon. Please also convey my thanks to your colleagues who helped to make my visit so pleasant and successful. I hope Amrath and the other two young men who were injured in the motor accident have now fully recovered.

I wonder if you have any plan to visit India in this Centenary year. If you have, do let me know at least a couple of months in advance. It is likely that I shall be away in Australia during a part of September. I need hardly add that it would be a joy to see you and Mrs. Ariyaratne in India. A good time to come might be in November when the Sarva Seva Sangh's annual conference is being held at Rajgir where a Japanese Buddhist organization is building a Stupa. You would then be able to meet all the Sarvodaya leaders together as this is also to be a pilgrimage to the Holy Buddhist spots in Rajgir.

With affectionate greetings from my wife and me for both of you,

Yours sincerely,
(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan at the Threshold of his Visit to Sri Lanka

(An article to a newspaper written by me)

Today at 6.30 p.m. a distinguished couple will arrive at Ratmalana airport. They are the great popular leader of India, namely Shri Jayaprakash Narayan and his wife Shrimathi Prabhavati Devi. They are here on a ten-day tour of this island on a special invitation by the Mahatma Gandhi Centenary Celebrations Committee.

During the Colonial era, Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, a pioneer of the Indian Socialist Movement proved to be a headache to the imperialists. Away from party politics and power-crazy diplomacy, working in an Ashram close to Buddhagaya along with Acharya Vinoba Bhave, this great mentor has dedicated his whole life to world peace and the service of humanity.

What Lord Bertrand Russel is to England, Shri Jayaprakash Narayan is to India. Only a minor difference exists between these two who elicit respect even from those who hold completely different viewpoints. That difference is that while Russel was heir to a comfortable life replete with educational facilities Jayaprakash owed only to a legacy of toil and trouble in his childhood.

Jayaprakash was born in Bihar in October 1902. His father was a poor rural government officer and underwent much suffering to bring up his two sons and two daughters. Determined to fight poverty with education, Jayaprakash became a keen student. He came first in his class every term and in 1919 got through the

Matriculation Examination as the candidate with the highest marks.

At 17 years, following custom he entered wedlock. He married Prabhavati Devi, daughter of Bujar Kishor Babu, a follower of Mahatma Gandhi and a close relative of Rajendra Prasad. Having won a State Scholarship to follow a Degree in Patna University, Jayaprakash forged ahead. But the course was stalled for it was at this juncture that Gandhi's clarion call to youth to forsake their higher studies for the cause of fighting for India's independence arose. Disappointing his father, Jayaprakash rallied to that cry and left the University. But one year after the youth movement got going, Mahatma Gandhi abandoned it, stranding many a youth.

Since Jayaprakash was branded as a fighter, the scholarship was cancelled and he could not pursue his studies at Patna. Then he remembered that America was a country where he could earn while studying. He left his wife with Mahatma Gandhi and went over to America almost penniless. He had no friends in the States but he earned 80 dollars after working in a fruit orchard. Then he went on to study first at California and then at Anoma University. Working in farms, factories and restaurants he earned enough to pursue periodically his university studies. In the end, the research study done for his MA in Economics and Political Science at Wisconsin was lauded, and is regarded as a great scholarly work even today.

Capitalism was repugnant to Jayaprakash especially after seeing how in America the rich fed on the labour of the poor. Due to the influence of his professors and student colleagues and the perusal of the works of H. N. Roy, Jayaprakash veered towards Marxism. In it he saw a better alternative to Gandhi's techniques of violating civil laws, and the Ahimsa Movement. Seven years later he came back to India as a very learned revolutionary, filled with knowledge of Marxist philosophy.

He then joined the staff of the Benaras Hindu University as a teacher in Economics and Social Science. The year was 1929. Now he could play a foremost role in the anti-British Movement for liberation of India. Yet at this critical juncture, he was disen-

chanted with the policy followed by the Indian Communists. He did not subscribe to the view then growing that the Indian National Movement was controlled by the affluent class of India of which Mahatma Gandhi was a tool.

It was at this time that the Socialist Party was born inside the Congress. Jayaprakash envisioned India as a Socialist State. The Congress was now being recognized as a National Front by the Indian Communist Party due to the rise of Hitler and the subsequent events in Europe, and the change of policies of the Russian Communist Party. This made Jayaprakash open the doors of Indian Socialism to Communism, but due to the latter's allegiance to Russia rather than to their mother country, a division between the two became imminent.

The outcome of all this was that Jayaprakash abandoned the dream of building Indian socialism based on a Russian structure. He was further disillusioned by the cruel massacres initiated by the State. He dreamt of steering Asian socialism along a typical Asian path. Pooling economic and political power, he felt, was a strategy that paved the way for dictatorship. For collective behaviour and social administration, alternate paths had to be sought.

Politics need not be divorced from ethics. Politics minus ethics only breed foul deeds. In the prisons and secret places where he languished during the Second World War, these ideas matured in the mind of Jayaprakash. The British hounded him and the Indian Communist Party indulged in a dirty habit of providing them secret information about this great man's hide-outs. Finally, he was captured and after a court case, Jayaprakash was imprisoned by the British. Mahatma Gandhi made this proclamation, on his arrest:

"J.P. is a great fighter. He sacrificed everything he had for the sake of his mother country. There is no limit to his energy. Never have I seen anyone who can withstand such suffering. His ideas may be different from mine. But I am not blind to his courage and love for the country. There is no one else to rival him in India as to his knowledge of Western Imperialism."

In November 1942, Jayaprakash fled from Hasanbagh Prison. The letters he wrote there entitled "To Soldiers of

Freedom,” received an immense amount of publicity. A 10,000 rupee award was promised by the British to anyone who could bring in Jayaprakash. What Indian would do such an ignominious act just to please the white sahibs? Well, one Indian did so. In Nepal, however, guerrilla fighters managed to rescue him. But he was again captured in Punjab and put into Lahore Prison, under heavy guard. Though all political prisoners were freed in 1945, Jayaprakash was freed only in 1946.

India now split into two and Pakistan was born. That those who had not worked in anyway for India’s freedom now were part of the Central Government Cabinet frustrated him.

Morally bankrupt politicians coming to the forefront of power in India was a phenomena hated by Gandhi and by him. Jayaprakash said, “The Congress, instead of becoming a political party, should be dissolved and transformed into a world service organization.”

Yet unexpected things were taking place. This great man, fired with intense love for his country, was being sequestered from active politics. Having indulged in a 21 day fast for ‘Soul-purification’ he joined the path of Mahatma Gandhi. After the fast, he proclaimed:

“Traditional socialism aimed at changes in institutions to annihilate the anomalies of the present society. Yet institutional changes alone are inadequate. The basic unit of society i.e. man himself has to be changed. That is why we should focus attention on virtuosity and correct paths. To create a new man in a new society, we should transform ourselves into humans qualified for such a society.”

Mahatma Gandhi was the link between the Socialist Party and the Congress Party. His death created a rift between the two. Had Gandhi lived on, his Ram Kingdom and Jayaprakash’s socialist state could have created a new Bharata Desha. In March 1949, the Socialist Party left the Congress.

The Socialist theories of Shri Nehru who accepted power and Jayaprakash, who rejected power, gradually became more and more distant. By 1957, they differed more than they agreed.

Yet Jayaprakash, a stranger to the sentiments of hatred, anger and jealousy, remained a steadfast friend of Shri Nehru till his death.

Jayaprakash, who was alert to the progress of the Indian Sarvodaya Movement from 1952 had, by 1957, realized the shallow aspect of party politics. There is no other party leader in India today who can be compared to this great leader who, for 40 years, had held many posts in many parties of India including the Congress Party.

Finally Jayaprakash came to the realization that the Sarvodaya path highlighted by Gandhi and Vinoba was the only way to the socialist path illumined by brotherhood, equality and freedom. Accordingly at the Buddhagaya Sarvodaya Conference attended by the President and Prime Minister of India, the great man surprised everybody by declaring that “he would make a pooja of his life to Vinoba by distancing himself away from party politics and living with the poor for the rest of his life.”

Thus the arena of Indian party politics lost a great visionary. But now a very great human was added to the Sarvodaya Movement and to the people.

The Ramon Magsaysay Award



Photo 323:
Ramon Magsaysay Gold Medal

People of different social levels frequented my House Under the Breadfruit Tree in the evenings. One evening among those who reclined in the old cane chairs in our drawing room were my friend Mr. Upali Senanayake and Prof. R.P. Jayewardene. It was Mr. Upali Senanayake who acted as the courier of the Sarvodaya message and of me to the high class business entrepreneurs, politicians, officers and others of the elite class. Speaking lightly of his own accomplishments, he spoke of me in exaggerated tones as the real saviour of our society.

Many men were enticed to visit me because of his adulation of me, his placing me high above his own father Mr. F.R. Senanayake, the pioneer of Sri Lanka's freedom struggle, Mr. D.S. Senanayake his 'baappa' (father's younger brother) and the

first Prime Minister of the island, Mr. R.G. Senanayake his elder brother and other National patriots. Before such audiences, he used to elaborate on themes such as the Satara Brahma Viharana, Satara Sangraha Vasthu, the Dharmadveepa-



Photo 324:
Radio at House Under the Breadfruit Tree which broadcasted the news about Magsaysay Award

Dhanyagara (granary) aim and the national flag, and would introduce me as the executor of the visions regarding these. He credited me with piloting certain programmes that he himself had authored, programmes such as weeding projects in rice fields with school children's participation, and with introducing ancient indigenous rituals to the farming process.

Placing his right hand outside the car and holding the steering wheel with his left hand, this Maha Kalu Sinhalaya (big made dark complexioned Sinhala man) relished driving with me to far off places such as Hambantota, Thanamalwila, Trincomalee, Vavuniya and Jaffna. Bereft of any political ambitions he was driven to achieve for the welfare of the average man, and for that alone.

That evening, I remember Neetha bringing the tea. Prof. R.P. Jayewardene was chatting to Charika, Vinya and Jeevan. I switched on the radio to listen to the evening news broadcast. It relayed the main piece of news 'Ceylon school master wins the Magsaysay Award.' Mr. Upali Senanayake shot up from his chair shouting, 'Ari! It's you, it's you!' Then like a child, he embraced me. 'What madness?' I said, and went out to listen. I then realized that the 1969 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership had actually been conferred on me.

Within one hour, our house was brimming with local and foreign media personnel, relatives, Sarvodaya workers, and well-

wishers. We had no resources to offer all of them even a cup of tea. The next morning, the Philippine Ambassador came to my house with the official declaration and the letter. Mr. A. Ratnayake, President of the Senate, and Senator D.L.F. Pedris, followed him in to congratulate me. There was a festive air at our abode for several days.



Photo 325:

The Philippines Ambassador arrives at the House Under the Breadfruit Tree to give me official news about the Award. Also in the photo are Neetha, Mr. Upali Senanayake and Mr. Karunananda

About a week before, a middle-aged stranger with innocent looks had visited my house and requested my palm for reading. What was his fee, I asked. Two rupees, he answered. In two minutes he made his prediction.

‘Sir, in one week you will be world-famous. You will get a huge treasure. Within a month, you and your wife will go abroad.’ With the two rupees, the man vanished. Never did I see him again. During this time, my father was in our ancestral house at Unawatuna. Many well-wishers had visited him too. Yet he had not responded to the news they gave. He did not accept that the person honoured was his son until he read it in the newspapers the next day. This created a dilemma for the villagers, including Ekmon aiya. The next day, the newspaper had published the news generously and also mentioned that I had said that I would not personally take the money, but would make a presentation of it to the Sarvodaya Movement. Then my father was exulted. ‘That is my son!’ My father came that evening to congratulate me. My mother was looking after our children then, staying in our house.

When we were to enplane at Ratmalana airport to fly to Manila via Hongkong, a large crowd of well-wishers had come.

Among them were Hon. A. Ratnayake, Hon. D.L.F. Pedris, Mr. M. W. Karunananda, Prof. L.G. Hewage and many members of the Executive Council. Our children were entrusted to my punchi akka and amma. Harsha, who had been sent away to the ancestral house as a punishment for his stubborn behaviour was brought back to my house, and off we flew to Manila.

As we landed, a middle-aged fair-skinned lady with a pretty face, along with another young lady, came onboard with a bouquet and a garland. I felt that I had seen this lady before. She welcomed us heartily and said that she was the Executive Trustee of Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation. She was Miss Belen H. Abreu. Among others who were there were Mr. Fernando, then Sri Lanka Ambassador to the Philippines and his wife. We were taken to a room reserved for special guests and with much applause, we were greeted as we walked ahead. Two of us drove in a special vehicle with the Executive Trustee, Miss Belen H. Abreu, and the others followed in the other vehicle. Our destination was Manila Hilton Hotel. On the vehicle was a sort of banner that read "Recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award."

A large suite in the hotel was at our disposal. Actually it was not a room but a unit consisting of a drawing room, bedrooms, bathrooms and a pantry. Our possessions were limited to two bags. Hence the apartment looked almost empty.

Having relaxed for some time, and having had a bath, we discussed the planned programme with Miss Abreu and Mr. Anglo. First Miss Abreu inquired about my health and said that the first time she saw me I was down with fever in a village tent and that she visited me later in hospital. Then I remembered that she had visited our International Camp at Uruwela. Actually I was not even conscious then. But I knew that about 200 local and foreign volunteers worked in the camp including Mr. Jyothi Shankar Singh, Secretary-General of the World Assembly of Youth and Mr. K.V. Reddy, its Asian Secretary. It was Dr. S. Sothinathan who later transferred me to the General Hospital. I had typhoid fever at that time, but I remembered her face as if in a dream. Miss Abreu went on to astound me with revelations from her file. In it, were photographs that profiled my life. For 3 years, they had been

hounding me and questioning various big wigs, including the Prime Minister, about my activities. Except for two government officers, all others had praised my work. She said they were proud to bestow this award on me. I was the young-est person to ever receive the award besides His Holiness the Dalai Lama.



Photo 326:
Senator Manahan, Miss Belen Abreu, and Sri Lankan
Ambassador in Philippines Mr. Fernando welcomed us at the
Airport

The next day, Miss Abreu handed us a detailed programme. It consisted of a rehearsal, the award ceremony, a meeting with the President and other high-ups, my delivering lectures at Universities and other public institutions, special tours and TV, Radio and Press interviews. The programme was to go on from August 27th to September 6th of 1969.

Prior to the main function, several Sri Lankans met me. Some of them were worried about how a villager dressed in white sarong and white banian and slippers was going to present himself to such a gathering, what responses would be elicited from the elite society etc. I sympathised with them but had no wish to

deviate from my natural self.

That our Government had made no official response to my receiving of this award did not disturb me. In the meantime, the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation saw to all our comforts.

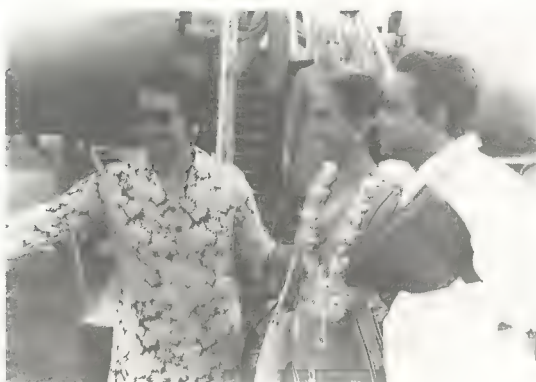


Photo 327:
Miss Belen Abreu escorts us

President Ramon Magsaysay was elected to power in 1953, and was a leader of the common people. The Phillippines had never had a leader who was so dear to the people. He would travel to any island and meet with people without any security. Very often he declared that what he wanted to do for his people was to appease the hunger of the poor, dress the poor better, provide them shelter from sun and rain and improve their health services.

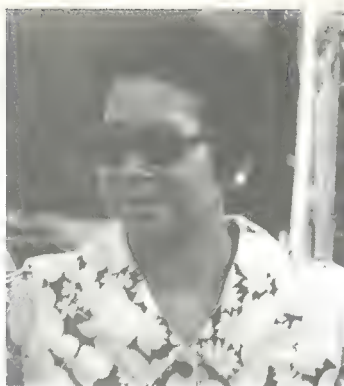


Photo 328:
Miss Belen Abreu

In this respect, despite many other short comings, the parallel leader from our country who went amidst his people was President Premadasa.

On March 17th 1957, Ramon Magsaysay succumbed to an untimely death when the plane he himself piloted and which was enroute to an island inhabited by poverty-stricken people crashed. His grief-stricken followers set up the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation to commemorate his memory. Senator Manahan and lawyer Belen Abreu whom we met were foremost among these followers.

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund of New York enabled the establishment of the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation. It was the Rockefeller Brothers Fund that built the impressive headquarters of the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation at Roxas Boulevard facing Manila lagoon. It was a 14-storeyed tower and a two storey L-shaped structure. The income received from renting out the various floors alone covered the award expenses. The building comprised a large assembly hall, office rooms, library, an archives that documented details of all community leaders in the world, the Magsaysay papers, function rooms, and an audio-visual room.

This award, which has come to be known as Asia's Nobel Prize, is awarded to five persons each year. The presentations are made for Government Service, Public Service, Community Leadership, Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication

Photo 329:
At the Uruwela camp
Mr. K. V. Reddy
and
Mr. Karunananda



Arts and International Understanding. Among the Magsaysay Award winners who preceded me were Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, Tunku Abdul Rahman (Malaysian Prime Minister), His Holiness Dalai Lama, Satyajit Ray, Kamaladevi Chattopadya, Mrs. Mary Rutnam and Tarzi Vittachchi of Sri Lanka.

While the Community Leadership Award was given to me, the Government Service Award was won by Hsu-Shin-Chu from the Republic of China, the Public Service Award by Dr. Kim Hyung Seo of Korea, and the International Understanding Award by the International Rice Research Institute represented by Dr. Robert Chandler, and the Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication Arts Award by Mitoji Nishimoto, a Japanese.



Photo 330:
Mr. Jyoti Shanker Singh,
the Secretary- General of
World Assembly of Youth

The award ceremony was held in the large modern hall named Philam Life Auditorium. The date was August 31, 1969. That was the birthday of Ramon Magsaysay. The ceremony was chaired by the Philippine Chief Justice. In the audience were the President and Lady Marcos, Senators, Ministers, Ambassadors and other distinguished guests all totalling about 2000.

The award winners were brought in, in a procession. As we came, everybody got up and applauded. On the stage were the Chief Justice, the Board of Trustees and the award winners. After the preliminaries were over each trustee read the bio-data and other details of the award winners entrusted to him. Then the winner was presented with a certificate, a very valuable gold medal and a cheque of \$ 10,000. Each recipient was given five minutes for a speech. I was seated just by the Chief Justice, but my turn came last. As I got up, a round of applause hitherto unsurpassed rose from the audience. The catalyst could have been my simple apparel.

The previous night, on the request of Miss Abreu, I had submitted a copy of my speech, but that night I made an impromptu speech.

Acceptance Speech

“It is with deep humility and renewed faith in the service of humanity that I rise on this memorable occasion to deliver this brief response. This is an honour you have given to my country, to the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of which I am a humble worker, and above all an honour given to those simple village people who responded to our call of “love and service.” I am only a medium chosen by destiny to assist the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation to carry the spirit of that great leader, the late President Ramon Magsaysay, into the minds and hearts of my own common people - for it was for the emancipation of the common man that he lived and died.

Great men of the calibre of Ramon Magsaysay do not belong to one country or one period or one generation. They are social phenomena that suddenly appear and disappear like flashes of lightning in darkness and show us the path. They belong to the

entire universe and eternity. Lord Buddha says “Rupan jeerathi maccanan - Nama goththan na jeerathi,” which means, “while all that is mortal in us decays, our noble thoughts, words and deeds will live long after physical remains are gone.” The true greatness of a man is known only by the way his fellowmen hold him in esteem after his death. Judging from the name he has left behind to be honoured and perpetuated in this manner, I am sure he must now be among the divine. May he bless us all in our endeavours to serve our fellow men, particularly those that are considered the lowest - the lowliest and the lost.

I believe the Foundation has elected me for the Community Leadership Award on the basis of the external manifestations of my behaviour in that particular field. Therefore, it is my duty to place before this august assembly some of my inner thoughts that motivated my external behaviour.

In the culture in which I was brought up I was fascinated from my childhood by certain thoughts, the implementation of which, however, will have to be postponed until my next life. *Peetho bhavatu lokocha*, meaning, “may all beings in the universe be well and happy,” was one such thought. Working for a more noble ideal than even the ideal of the greater good of the greater number became a passion in my life. Mahatma Gandhi and Acharya Vinoba Bhave called this ideal ‘the welfare of all,’ using the Sanskrit word *Sarvodaya*.

For the awakening of all in society, we have to awaken ourselves first. Again, my own Buddhist culture showed me four noble goals towards which every individual should strive. The first is loving kindness, or *metta* as we call it. As a good mother loves her one and only child and protects him at the risk of her own life we are taught to love and protect all living beings. Secondly, we are taught to cultivate *karuna*, or compassion, which motivates us to go in search of those who suffer and help remove the causes which have brought upon them that suffering. Thirdly, we are taught to train ourselves to take altruistic joy in others’ happiness. We call this *muditha*. Fourthly, to educate oneself in *upekkha*, or equanimity, which gives one emotional balance to take fame or blame, profit or



Photo 331.1:
Being ushered on to the
stage for the award
ceremony



Photo 331.2:
My Acceptance Speech



Photo 331.3:
After receiving the Award from the
Chief Justice of the Philippines the
Chairman of the Award Foundation
greets me

Photo 331.4:
Congratulations from
Lady Magsaysay



Photo 332:
With other Magsaysay Award
Winners



loss, success or failure with detachment and patience. These four qualities are called divine abodes because they elevate the follower to divine levels. It is this philosophy of life that motivated me for this silent mission which you have adjudged worthy of honour.

These are not impractical idealistic thoughts that have no relevance to the modern scientific and technological world. Modernity is not determined by time. It is determined by our attitudes and outlook to life and living. These thoughts we translated into practical application to bring about significant changes in the grass-roots of our society - changes for the better among our rural communities which are the foundation of our culture, freedom and human dignity. And wasn't it our revered Ramon Magsaysay himself who said that "democracy should start from the grass-roots?"

The technique we adopted to translate thoughts into action was a call to all to share their "time, thought and energy" in the service of their fellowmen. We called it *shramadana*. Sharing (*dana*), compassionate speech (*priya vacana*), constructive activity (*arthacharya*) and equanimity (*samantmatha*) are the four salient features of *shramadana*.



Photo 332.1:
Placing a wreath at the
memorial of President Rizal

“These thoughts and actions, in their own small way are laying a strong spiritual and material foundation for rebuilding a new Ceylon - a new Sri Lanka - where I assure you science and spirituality will be harmonized and the island will deserve once again to be called *Dharmadweepa* - the Island of Righteousness. Here and now I declare in the name of that great leader, the Lord Buddha, that every cent of this monetary award and every element of personal recognition that you have given me today will be utilized for this noble end. For I believe as he believed that “you can find yourself only to the extent you can lose yourself.” Lose yourself in what? Lose yourself completely and totally in the service of your fellowmen to free them from the causes of all suffering; namely, greed, ignorance and hatred.”



Photo 333:
Arrival in Sri Lanka with
Magsaysay Award

Actually this award was the greatest recognition that I had received so far. Overlooking the attitudes of our own big-wigs those living outside of our country had recognised my services and this was a big relief to Neetha and me. Here I remember something told to me by my friend, Mr. Duncan White of Olympic fame. ‘As I was running,’ he said ‘I felt I was entrusted with carrying the honour of the whole island of Ceylon with me.’ Actually, when I was in Philippines, I, too felt this same responsibility.

When I returned with the Magsaysay Award to Sri Lanka, no official facilities were provided. Actually, I had to wait 45 minutes more than the other passengers, since a foolish Custom Officer raised an issue about my Gold Medal and the \$10,000 cheque. This issue was solved when a senior customs officer intervened and allowed me to go.

It was a time when the cold-war between the two power-blocs in the world was at its peak. So I was branded a CIA agent by the Marxists and the Communists, and my Sarvodaya

Magsaysay Award Reception at Nalanda College

Photo 334.1:
Mapa Ra Podi Appuhamy
making a speech.
Others in the photo are
Rt. Hon. Bishop Lakshman
Wickremesinghe, I,
Neetha, Mr. A. Ratnayake,
Mr. Gunapala
Wickremaratne (Nalanda
Principal) and
Senator D.L.F. Pedris



Photo 334.2:
Mr. Karunananda ushers
us to Nalanda

Photo 334.3:
The Sarvodaya workers
singing a welcome song



Movement was also disparaged in this light. Later, many of them apologised to me. I told them that among the four Brahma Viharana that I practised, equanimity stood out and that I could accept praise as well as insult in a neutral way. Among those who were acutely jealous of me were state officers. In fact, one of them had been hoping for the award, I later found out. So, when I got the award, in the style of the fox who said the grapes were sour, he explained things in this way:

‘What has really happened here is not Ariyaratne’s status rising, but the status of the Magsaysay award lowering.’

I attended the last rites of this person, indulged in Anitya Bhavana (Meditation on Impermanence) before his cortege, bestowed merit on him and prayed that in his next birth, he would be born with the prospect of feeling happy at other’s gain, and in short having the quality of ‘Muditha.’

There was another respectable and devout gentleman who suggested that I deposit the cheque in his name in a foreign bank and that he could accrue to me the amount thrice or four times the real value of the cheque back at home! I mentioned this even in a newspaper interview without of course mentioning names. The newspapers provided much publicity for me. Mr. Reggie Michael, Editor of Daily Mirror, wrote an editorial on me calling it ‘A Man in a Million’. Newspapers in the Philippines and for-



Photo 335:

Handing over the prize cheque to the Prime Minister Hon. Mr. Dudley Senanayake

eign journalists had devoted pages to my speech. Months later the Readers Digest, in its first feature article on a Sri Lankan, wrote about me captioning the article "Ceylon's Pick and Shovel Samaritans - Ari's Road to Heaven."

Perhaps being persuaded by Mr. A. Ratnayake, Mr. D.L.F. Pedris and Mr. Upali Senanayake, the Prime Minister Mr. Dudley Senanayake organised a function to honour Neetha and me. Some ministers, a few 'elite' class citizens, and the Elders Council and Executive Council of Sarvodaya attended. After my speech, I handed the cheque I had received to the President of Sarvodaya, Mr. Karunananda to be invested in Sarvodaya work.

Other felicitation ceremonies were organised for me by the Mahinda College Old Boy's Association (OBA) at Mr. Albert Edirisinghe's house; by the Principal, staff and students of Mahinda College at Galle; and by the Central Council of Social Services in Colombo. Even provincial functions were organised by various institutions.

The Physician of Ihala Kuruketiyawa

One day, a well-built gentleman of about 35 years of age visited me at my House Under the Breadfruit Tree. I noticed almost instantly the sorrowful look on his face. I requested him to sit and asked the purpose of his visit.

“Sir, I came to ask for help from you.”

“Tell me what you need.”

“I am a clerk working in the Colombo Municipality. A few months back, I had some throat trouble. Doctors concluded that it was cancer and gave me radiation treatment. Still I am not cured. Now they say I won’t live for more than 3 months. I came to know that there is a native physician by the name of Kawwa in Ehala Kuruketiyawa in Puttalam district. It seems it is not motorable by ordinary vehicles. I came to find out whether you can let me travel there by your jeep, Sir.”

“I drive that jeep. I have no driver. So I will drive you there this week-end.”

He agreed. We went through Puttalam to Anamaduwa. It was a very rugged road made by the village council, and we finally found the doctor’s house. He was not there. A child showed us the field he was working in, and we went there. The physician, clad only in a span of cloth, was working in the field. Seeing us, he washed himself, dressed in a sarong and came to his mud hut with us.

He examined the patient and said, “Sir, if you had come to me before the radiation treatment I could have cured you. Now I can only guarantee you another year of life, if you follow my instructions.”

He informed us that by tradition he was a Veda Mahaththaya (physician) and that, according to the modes of treatment handed down through family generations, he treated various wounds and cancers. There are about 64 varieties of cancers according to him, most of which are curable. We had lunch at his house which was comprised of sweet potatoes from his garden and scraped coconut.

Since our elderly villagers are repositories of information not only about cancer but of various other types of knowledge, and since I respect this group as my teachers, I went on probing him.

“Do you live happily, Veda Mahaththaya?” (native physician).

“Very happily.”

“What are the ingredients of a happy life?”

“There should be a very good environment. See the atmosphere here, the flora, the paddy fields, the wafting breeze. In this environment we should be able to live without tension or fear. Secondly, we need water for our daily life and for our farming. Thirdly, we need very simple clothes to cover our nakedness. We need fuel to light our houses and cook our food. Here, we have no electricity, so we need at least kerosene oil. We also need a road which gives us access to the town, and some form of communication so that we can be alert to what is happening in the country. We need a sound education for our children. Beyond this, we need entertainment, to preserve our good customs, morals, and spiritual development. Other than these, nothing else is needed to gain happiness.”

The basic human needs which are subscribed to today by Sarvodaya were instilled in me by this Veda Mahaththaya. I gave him some cash wrapped in a sheaf of betel and returned home with the patient.

The friendship between the physician and me grew. He used to visit me many times at Maradana coming by bus, spending the night, calling that patient and treating him. At times I also visited him. Eventually his village became part of the Sarvodaya village development programme. We also sent a youth to his village to be trained by him.

Not much time passed until April insurgency of 1971 had commenced. The youth sent to Kuruketiya returned suddenly. Many months went by. I sent someone in search of the physician, but we found that he had succumbed to death by natural causes. His techniques of treatment were lost to society with his death. I had urged some of my friends at the Medical Faculty to research his methods but nothing had been done and I criticized them for their negligence. The cancer patient actually lived for another 2 years.

However, the legacy he left for me, his information of the basic human needs, continues to pulsate within our movement. They are being talked about today in world bodies such as the World Bank and the UN. In 1971, an article that I wrote on human needs appeared in the official journal of WHO, and the topic was introduced internationally.

Go Back to Your Country Today

In 1970, my malli (younger brother) Weeraman Jinadasa, was working as an Engineer for the County Council of Kent, England. Sir John Kotelawala's house in England was also in Kent, and I phoned him from my brother's house. He invited us for dinner and told me to pack my bags to go back home before coming to dinner. That statement was a riddle to us. As we entered his house, we noticed on the front doorframe the phrase "Siya ratatamai kavadath" ("Always for the Motherland") boldly written in Sinhala script. After dinner, Sir John Kotelawala began to speak roughly. He criticised the UNP leaders and others vehemently and said that they were in for a disgraceful defeat in the forthcoming election.



Photo 336:

At Amersham in Kent (England) - at my brother's house. Malli Weera Jinadasa his wife Kamala, their eldest son Deepal and children in neighbouring houses.

Mrs. Bandaranaike, he foretold, would win with more than two thirds of the seats.

“How do you know, Sir?”

“Why when I was Prime Minister, people used to flock round me and say “Sir, you will win grandly.” But finally I lost. The people are repeating the same story with Dudley. Since I am out of active politics, no one fabricates things to please me. That is why I am foretelling the UNP defeat.”

“So, sir, why are you telling me this?”

“As a leader of a national movement, can’t you understand? When the government of a country changes, you should be there. Go back immediately tomorrow, and the day after, go and congratulate the Madam.”

“Sir, how can I depart so soon?”

“I have spoken to the Air Lanka Manager and reserved a seat for you.”

Following his instructions, I flew back to the country. I cast my vote the next day, went to the PM’s office and gave my congratulations to Madam Bandaranaike.

From Delgaha Yata Gedera to Meth Medura

It was the year 1970. This was the period when Mr. Upali Senanayake accompanied me all over, like my right hand, visiting Sarvodaya camps throughout the island. My leisure time was spent at his house on Don Carolis Road or at Delgahayata Gedera (the House Under the Breadfruit Tree), at the Kahatagaha Mines office, or in the Golf Club behind the cemetery, holding discussions about the future of Sarvodaya.



Photo 337:
Mr. Merryl A. Fernando

The Magsaysay Award had elevated the Sarvodaya Movement and people's trust in it had intensified. The weeding campaign started by Mr. Senanayake, had weakened at this time due to jealousy and red tape associated with the bureaucracy. Being a Vice President of our Movement, his attention now focused more and more on Sarvodaya.

Once, the two of us came for dinner at the Fountain Cafe, after viewing a cinema at the Regal Theatre, where we met Mr. Merryl A. Fernando, Proprietor of Bogala Mines. Mr. Fernando spoke in praise of my work when Mr. Upali Senanayake intervened to say "Words of praise are not enough. We need help."

"What is it you need?" Mr. Merryl Fernando asked.

"Our house is not adequate to handle the increasing workload. Please find us a place in Colombo" I said.

He thought for some time and said he could not find a place in Colombo, but an ancestral house of his at De Soysa Road in Moratuwa was vacant and if I would like that, he would donate it to me.

The next morning he took me to Moratuwa and showed me the land which covered about one and half acres with the house called Meth Medura, all under the care of a single watchman.

I said our headquarters and training school could be housed there, upon which, he handed me the keys of the house saying. "As long as the Sarvodaya Movement goes on, Meth Medura belongs to you. This house was built about 150 years back and my ancestors named it Meth Medura (house of loving kindness), perhaps predicting its future and seeing its great destiny as a venue of a compassionate national movement."



Photo 338:
Mr. Upali Senanayake

He laughed as he said those words. The two of us, Upali Senanayake and I, were too astonished by the gift to say anything. Then Mr. Fernando said "This is a meritorious act." That donation signalled a stupendous service for Sarvodaya. Ever since thousands of

young men and women have been trained there and then assigned to the Sarvodaya district centres and divisional centres which number about 400.

Then they went to work in about 10,000 villages. The house, Meth Medura, not only became famous here but all over the world as well.

At that time, a volunteer team from the Netherlands established a Community Centre connected to Sarvodaya in Amersfoort, Netherlands. They named it Meth Medura.

Twenty five years elapsed. Mr. Fernando used to visit us from time to time deriving vast happiness from our work. One day, he came with his daughter, Mrs. Nelum Siriwardhana and handed the deed to me, gifting Meth Medura to Sarvodaya. So the success gained by Sarvodaya so far is owed in a large measure to this soft spoken man who is always happy and contented.

Mr. Merryl Fernando had a temperament of equanimity that was also displayed when the situation at his Bogala Mines oscillated between rising and falling.

Once having read of a quadruplet birth at Kalutara, he went there and supplied the poor family with all their needs. When the head of the family inquired who he was, he laughed and said that his identity was not important. He believed in the theory that real generosity and compassion should be accompanied by the negation of self.



Photo 339:
Mr. Upali Senanayake, Mr. Karunananda,
and Prof. Malalasekera



Photo 340:
Mr. Merryl Fernando, daughter Nelum,
grandson Dimitri and two of us

Photo 341:
Mr. Felix Dias
Bandaranaike addresses
a family gathering in
Meth Medura



Photo 342:
My office at
Meth Medura

Photo 343:
Planting paddy in Meth
Medura field





Photo 344:
Mr. Alex Tennekoon conducting health lessons for pre-school teachers

Having retired from business entrepreneurship, the last years of his life were spent with his daughter and grand child Dimithri.

While relaxing after dinner, in the midst of talk and laughter, this great man suddenly developed a heart attack and collapsed and died. The day was 13th May 1988. He earned an indelible name in Sarvodaya history. May he attain Nibbana!

Since I was working on the Nalanda College staff and since my children attended Colombo schools, I could not shift the office to Moratuwa immediately, and for some time Meth Medura was entrusted to my sister Padma and her husband, Buddhadasa Navaratne, and later to Wimal Wijesooriya.



Photo 345:
The first childrens gathering
(pre-school) at Meth Medura



Photo 346:
Young women undergoing community leadership training

This 170-year-old dilapidated house was surrounded by jungle growth. Soon, we transformed it into a fitting place to run our training programmes. Gradually, my family and I came to reside there, and volunteers like M.D. Abeynaike, B. A. Sumanadasa, B.A. Gunadasa, Vincent Sirisena, Saliya Samarawickrama, and Ukku Banda had sojourns here.

The community living which inspired me and was one of my dreams began at Meth Medura. Thousands who trained there went on to do service to humanity, not only on this island but to the outside vast world through the portals of Meth Medura.

Stop Your Roof From Leaking

Meth Medura had now assumed a very pleasing atmosphere. Day and night, youth were engaged in various activities while about 50 followed daytime courses. From 5.00 am. to 10.00 pm, communal life there consisted of *bhavana* (meditation), environmental cleaning, Shramadana, agriculture, small industries, community leadership training, vocational training, music, singing, other cultural activities, sports and pre-school training.



Photo 347:

Dr. E. F. Schumacher, author of "Small is Beautiful" visiting Meth Medura

Well - Wishers to Meth Medura



Photo 348:

Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, Dr. Hewanpola Ratnasara Thero and I at Meth Medura

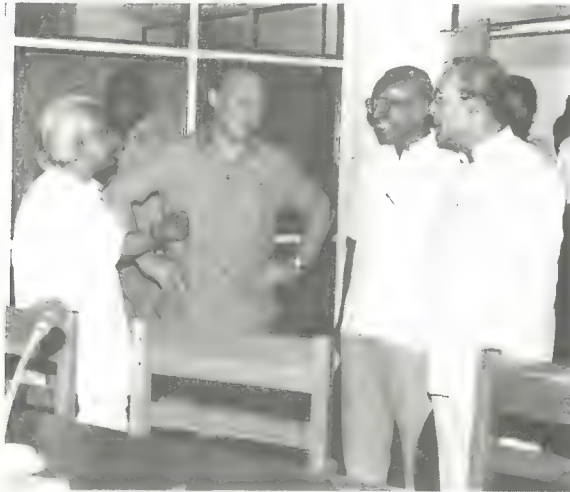


Photo 349:

Dr. Sjeff Theunis, General-Secretary of NOVIB, Mr. Wimalasiri De Mel, MP, and Mr. Bernard Zoysa, MP, at Meth Medura.

Well - Wishers to Meth Medura

Photo 350:
Ven Pandit Nedalagamuwa
Jinananda Thero and Governor-
General William Gopallawa
at Meth Medura



Photo 351:
Charika, Loku Akka (elder sister)
and Amma (my mother)

Photo 352:
Mr. Gerard Van
Vlijman, General-
Secretary NOVIB and
his wife at Meth
Medura



Well - Wishers to Meth Medura

Photo 353:
Ven. Ananda Maitreya
Mahanayake Thero at Meth Medura



Photo 354:
With Bishop Lakshman Wickremasinghe

Photo 355:
Vinya selling a Sarvodaya flag to
Governor-General Mr. William
Gopallawa. Vice President
Mrs. Sita Rajasuriya and I are
also in the picture



Everybody participated not only in food production but in cooking, serving, washing and cleaning up. That none of the youth got entangled in the 1971 youth insurgency added lustre to our Movement. One morning while I was working in my office, a middle aged gentleman, golden complexioned, clad in white shirt and white trousers, crowned by a crop of curly hair alighted from a chauffeur driven vehicle. It was a rainy day. I came out of my room and greeted him.



Photo 356:
Mr. Tissa Wijewardene

"Are you Ariyaratne?" he asked in English.

I replied in the affirmative.

"I am Tissa," he introduced himself. He said that he had read about our Movement and had come to visit the place. I gave him a detailed account of the Sarvodaya movement, its aims, philosophy and programmes, utilising the charts displayed on the walls and other visual aids. The roof, however, continued to leak in the pouring rain and I apologised to him about that condition and said that a lack of funds was responsible for the state of the roof of Sarvodaya headquarters. Batik was being produced at that time by the trainees but since it was the work of amateurs, sales were difficult and this resulted in a paucity of funds. He asked me how much all that batik was worth and I replied that it would be worth about 10,000 rupees.

Mr. Tissa Wijewardena signed in the Visitors book and left. After about half an hour, his vehicle came back without him. The driver handed me a short letter and two cheques.

The letter read, "Send me all the Batiks. I am sending a 10,000 rupee cheque for them. The other cheque of 10,000 rupees is to ensure that your roof does not continue to leak."

That was how Mr. Tissa Wijewardena, founder-President of the Anglo-Asian Company, joined our Movement. It was he who played the major role in the discussions at the Damsak Mandiraya family gathering hall that were held in the aftermath of the 1983 racial riots. Several business entrepreneurs attended that meeting.

Later, he gave me the fullest co-operation in organizing the National Unity Conference held at the BMICH and also in the Peace walk from Kataragama to Nagadeepa. He also provided me a large caravan-like vehicle in which I could sleep, write and take care of other bodily needs.

During the last stages of his life, he was rather sick. But he exerted a lot of effort trying to solve the unemployment problem of the country. Though walking had become difficult, and his eye sight had dimmed, he was in the habit of often visiting me unexpectedly. When he passed away at the age of 80 years, I was not in Sri Lanka. In our engineering section, there is a large board that displays the words, "Sri Lanka at work." Those words are redolent of Tissa Wijewardena's memory as the idea for this board was his.

My Father Passes Away

On April 9, 1970, I was in the village of Thelulla near Magama in the International Camp organized by Sarvodaya and the World Assembly of Youth. I received a telegram informing me that father had suddenly fallen ill. Delegating the responsibility of running the camp to another, I drove in the Mitsubishi Jeep to Unawatuna in two hours.



Photo 357:
My father - at 89 years

I was informed that my father had slipped and broken his hip bone. Native treatment had already been given. The next morning I went to Galle with Ekman aiya, met the chief physician of the Galle Hospital, Dr. D.N. Perera, and another doctor whose name I cannot remember and they came home to see my father's condition.

Having examined my father, this doctor, speaking in English informed me that it was useless hospitalising my father and to let him spend his last few days peacefully at home. He asked me to provide all the facilities to make his last days comfortable. He said my father might live another 3 days. He did not know that my father could understand English.

Father now spoke.

"Sir, you are a doctor as brilliant as my son. But I will not die on the day you predicted. I will die on April 29 at 2.00 pm."

The doctor was astonished and went close to my father.

"Thaththa. Why do you insist on dying on April 29?"

"Sir, I have done much meritorious work. Further, I have brought up a son who, like a *Bodhisattva* (Buddha aspirant) is serving the poor. So I am not scared about death. That is a much better alternative to suffering. I want to die on a good day, a day when great savants like Ven. Sri Sumangala Nayaka Thero who brought about a resurgence of Buddhism and the Sinhala race, died. The Great Anagarika Dharmapala and my own teacher Ven. Ahangama Sri Sumanjothi Nayaka Thero also died on this day."

The two doctors remained silent but later pronounced that my father's heart and lungs were still strong. 'And his mind,' I added.

Our house soon turned into a Nursing Home. Ekman aiya was the chief nurse and there were two other professional nurses too. They all looked after my father. I sent telegrams to Weera Jinadasa, my malli, that father was very sick but that he need not bother to come. I also informed Pathma and Amara, my sisters, to keep the 28th and 29th free to visit father. Loku akka and Baby akka were already by father's bedside. I went back to Thelulla, finished the camp and went on to Anuradhapura with the international delegates.

But as I entered the city at about 10 pm. Mr. Dudley Dissanayake, Special Commissioner of Anuradhapura, sent me word that he had got a message asking me to come home. I returned to Colombo and with Neetha, the children, Pathma and Amara left for my father's home at about 3.00 pm. At Bentota we nearly met with an accident but somehow by April 27th were at my father's bedside. Sensing that his end was very near, we got ready for the last rites.

The monks in the temple chanted pirith day and night. Those near and dear to father chatted with him on and off. He still could relate an anecdote of old, though with difficulty.

Every once in two or three hours, he lamented about Amara's condition.

"I am so sad you are childless. That's my only sorrow. I will be born as your son. Do not fear," he said.

On the 28th evening father stopped talking. No sound escaped him. I forbade crying and weeping. Then we began the recitation of Sathi Pattana Sutta, the pirith, and stanzas from Dhammapada and Jina Panjaraya, a sutra he adored. The whole night we were up.

April 29, 1970 came. We all knew that the inevitable would happen. Father's only signs of life were opening his eyes now and then, trying to say something and moving his hands and feet.

At 1.00 pm. The end was drawing near. I could see my father's bosom pal, Loku Hamuduruwo (chief monk), Ven. Ahangama Vanarathana Thero, seated on the upper step of the temple's flight of steps with his hand on his cheek. I sat by my father placing my hands on his chest and hands and saw to it that no one cried out loud.

I had said that the Dhammapada should be recited till his last breath and then all the womenfolk could cry to their heart's content. According to our beliefs, the last thoughts of a dying person affect the form of his next birth. Father breathed loud and long. He opened his eyes wide and looked around. A smile came to his toothless mouth. Then he closed his eyes. Amara nangi now kissed him on his lips and shouted repeatedly, "Thaththa, be born again as my son". I struggled to drive her away. Then father

opened his eyes again, smiled and breathed his last. I let everybody, siblings, children, grandchildren and my mother, weep loud and long and went to temple.

Nine years later I wrote on the last moments of my father's life when I was in Jakarta, Indonesia. Then I went on a pilgrimage to Boro Budur and other shrines and asked for merit for my father. May my father attain Nibbana.

"Piyehi vippayogo dukkho."

("Parting from loved ones begets sorrow")

Youth Insurgency of 1971

In the years 1968, 1969 and especially in 1970, I noticed something strange within our camps. It was the rather peculiar behaviour of some of the youth who attended the family gatherings of Sarvodaya but did not participate in the work programme. They numbered about 10 in each camp. These groups were trying to inculcate violent thinking among our youth. I noticed this trend everywhere in Hambantota, Moneragala, Kegalle and Anuradhapura.

I alerted the Prime Minister, Mr. Dudley Senanayake, other leaders and the opposition leader, other big-wigs in the political arena, the police chief and other security personnel. I could sense the growing change and reported the danger signals especially to the newspaper editors of Daily News and Lankadeepa. I even wrote articles to Lankadeepa, hinting at the increasing militancy.

At this time, when I was taking a class at Nalanda College, the peon called David came and informed me that a school Principal had come to meet me. I went to meet him after class. He was Mr. Halpe, who headed Battaramulla Central School. I took him to the canteen. Tearfully he told me that he could not control his school now and that the laboratory, teacher's quarters and class rooms were damaged by a group of students under some wrong leadership and that this was all heading towards some catastrophe. He had tried his very best to remedy things but failing, had come to solicit Sarvodaya aid.

I asked him for some time to address the teachers and pupils and he assented. On a scheduled day, along with some senior Nalandians, I went there. On entry, an overwhelming sadness arose in me about the fate of our schools and education system. Students had congregated in the hall. The hoots they had begun to emit last-

ed for more than 30 minutes. They did not allow the Principal to speak. I began to speak by making a humble plea to let me speak now that they had made their noise. They fell silent. About 7 or 8 of them left the Hall. After a one hour speech, I said that during the week-end we would be returning to hold a Shramadana camp to repair the school. The 2 day camp was held with the help of 50 Nalanda College students and 100 students of Battaramulla. The School was repaired and the children's minds were also repaired to some extent.

The next week we organized a Seminar and exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi's life at Battaramulla. The school head had invited the Secretary of the Ministry of Education to declare the programme open. Other distinguished visitors were Mr. Bogoda Premaratne, Principal of Royal College, Mr. M.W. Karunananda, Head of Ananda College, Mr. Dharmasena Arampatta, Head of Prince College and Mr. Shelton Weerasinghe, head of Wesley College. All were made to sit on mats.

Then the Secretary of the Education Ministry arrived. When I was introduced, he quipped, "Ah! the Shramadana man!" and sat very reluctantly on the mat. His speech was the last. The core of his speech ran as follows:

"Children! Those children living in those big tiled houses over there attend schools like Royal, Ananda and Nalanda. Those children living in cadjan thatched houses attend school here. That represents the class gap in our country. A social revolution is called for to bridge this gap."

Everybody, adults and children, were overwhelmed with astonishment by this speech. In my vote of thanks, without directly attacking him, I described Sarvodaya's own attempt at a creative non-violent struggle to bridge the gap between the haves and have-nots.

This incident took place at the tail end of 1970. I had no doubt that massive blood-shed and massacres were around the corner. But it was useless to warn the egoistic ones, never far-seeing but luxuriating in the abundance of public resources. I decided that the most I could do was to retrieve my own youth and the 300 plus Sarvodaya villages from the impending chaos. Having alerted our

full time workers, I summoned about 300 village elders in each district and gave them a warning. The last such meeting was held at Vavuniya on March 31, 1971.

I gave them this message:

"The foundation for a very militant rebellion has been laid by our so-called politicians and bureaucrats who are devoid of any national feeling. Now just a match stick is necessary to ignite the whole inflammatory situation. From the inception of our movement we have strived to establish a just society via harmless methods and by practical examples.

The privileged were blind to our path leading to education, development and peace. They were deaf to the sound of our endeavours. Now we are limited in our activities to the preservation of the lives of our fulltime Sarvodaya workers."

This meeting was chaired by Mr. Neville Jayaweera, Government Agent of Vavuniya and the speech was translated into Tamil by a member of the Communist party, working in the kachcheri (office of the provincial administration). I told Mr. Jayaweera that I would stop my village rounds and stay in the headquarters, and went on to discuss the issue till midnight and then returned home.

Two days later, at a party held by the FAO delegates I discussed the problem at length with my friend, Mr. Susil Siriwardena who was then in charge of the Government Youth Farms. Sharing my anxiety, he asked me whether anything could still be done to avert the impending crisis. I replied that once the first shot is fired the Government will launch into action. A few days later I heard that Mr. Susil Siriwardena himself had been arrested. Through Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe, he sent me a short note from the Remand Prison.

Before the actual insurgency commenced, I tried many times to meet Mr. Rohana Wijeweera, the JVP leader, personally. What I wanted was to convince him that a non-violent (*ahimsa*) path was a



Photo 358:
Mr. Rohana Wijeweera



Photo 359:
Mr. T.B. Werapitiya

much better alternative than a militant path destructive of human lives. But as destiny would have it, I met him after he was behind bars.

From prison he had sent me a letter asking for aid. I sent the letter back, asking him to send it through the Prisons Commissioner. I came to know that capitalising on the issue, a member of the Security Council had suggested my arrest too. Since Mr. Stanley Senanayake, the Police Chief and the Army Commander had strongly disapproved of this suggestion, the Honorable Prime Minister Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike had told that bureaucrat not to use national crises to cover up personal grudges. So, after that, I had to be careful in my actions with regards to the arrested rebel leaders.

Through my daughter Charika and another youth, I sent about 80 books from my library plus clothes, soap, towels and other items to the imprisoned youth. Because of Rohana's persistent requests, I visited him in prison. Since the Prisons Commissioner, Mr. Delgoda, knew me well, I could talk freely with Rohana. During the one hour I talked with him, I tried to convince him of a non-violent path.

Not a single Sarvodaya worker was taken into custody in 1971, a fact that gave me immense joy. About 371 Sarvodaya villages also escaped the catastrophe. There is a whole gamut of my experiences related to the 1971 insurgency that I will not duplicate here as they have already been published in other books. I will only mention here that reciprocating violence with violence will never eradicate the root causes of that violence. That our rulers never realized this was and still is a tragedy.

The first two weeks of April I spent in the House Under the Breadfruit Tree. Suddenly, one day Mr. Stanley Senanayake, the Inspector-General of Police, and Mr. T.B. Werapitiya, the Deputy Inspector General (a former teacher of mine at Mahinda College) entered my house. Mr. Senanayaka was all smiles as he entered and

asked me how I was getting on. After they sat, I showed them a huge portrait of Che Guevera.

They were upset, but I calmed them saying that I displayed the portrait to refute the theory going around that there was a connection between Che Guevera and the insurgency. It is a disgrace to the former, I said, shocking them more. I then told them that I had met Che Guevera at Liege in Belgium and had an indepth discussion with him at that meeting. I went on to narrate the following facts.

Towards the end of the 1960s, I delivered lectures on Sarvodaya in many universities, schools and community centres of the Netherlands and Belgium. The Revd. Father who had organized the lecture at Liege University told me that Che Guevera would speak on the same platform as me that day on The Violent Revolution. My assigned topic was The Non-violent Revolution. Though I did not take the matter seriously, when I entered the Hall and saw our pictures and themes displayed prominently, I thought that I should have taken the matter more seriously.

In a room to the left of the hall I set my eyes on a well-built man with long hair and a full flowing beard. As I entered, this person, Che Guevera got up, embraced me and said, "Comrade Ari. I have been waiting to meet you."

"Comrade Che, meeting you is a very significant event in my life. That our goals are similar it is true. Yet you are the most fierce guerrilla leader and I am so harmless that I do not even kill a mosquito. So how can the two of us be similar?"

"Who said that I am harmful? It's all imperialist propaganda. I am a doctor and I love to cure people afflicted with leprosy. But what is the seed of leprosy? A handful of capitalists who have reduced billions of Latin Americans to an utterly impoverished state without food, water or clothing. Having been informed of this, I joined hands with Castro and destroyed Batista's army. But in this battle I harboured no grudge against any soldier in that army. If ever any of our soldiers wounded any of the opposing army, I first saw to it that they were attended to before moving on to further action. First aid was given to them and even operations were done. So do not believe that I am a wrong doer. I fight against wrong deeds, not against the wrong doers."

His words made me realize that a person with good motives, even if his means are flawed, can be filled with humanitarianism. Maybe it was this condition that led Mahatma Gandhi not to oppose certain military tactics that sought to eradicate a wrong. He valued those who acted with conviction more than those who were inactive and silent before a wrong.

I explained to those two high police officers that revolutions which tolerate the murder of innocent men and women are not true revolutions. I explained to them the process by which genuine peace and democracy could be achieved. It was by hundred percent non-violent techniques that the present conditions could be transformed politically and structurally.

While the visitors enjoyed tea prepared by Neetha, I put Che Guevara's portrait safely away. An amusing incident that took place at this stage must be mentioned. My visitors were in uniform and dangling from the right side of Mr. Werapitiya's belt was a pistol scabbard. I remembered him teaching us Shakespeare's plays such as Hamlet and Macbeth when I was a Grade 10 student at Mahinda College. I also remember him helping in Shramadana work in the areas of Kanana-Malambe-Nikgaha and Gavaragiriya. Therefore, I felt like making a joke.

"Sir, Aren't you ashamed to carry pistols?"

At that, Mr. Werapitiya burst into laughter. He took out the pistol, opened it and showed it to me. There was no ammunition!

"I dangle this as a part of my uniform and also to instill fear. I may shoot myself but never others."

We all laughed at that. Mr. Stanley Senanayake said that his pistol was, of course, loaded with one bullet which he would never use. Actually, these policemen were humble and kind officers.

In the first week of April, a delegation from the Belgium Sarvodaya Society arrived at Meth Medura. They were keen to see the village of Kumbukgollawa with which they were connected. I told them that the time was not suitable or safe, but they did not want to heed this advice. So I entrusted them to Sarath Wijesinghe and a few others, saying that they had to be protected even at the cost of our lives. Now the April insurgency was in full swing. I had no news of them until April 15th. This was two weeks after they had

been with me. They returned with their lives intact and we were all greatly relieved

When they had arrived in Kumbukgollawa, their escorts and the villagers took them through the jungle to the Anuradhapura-Puttalam road to avoid the youth rebels. Within one hour of their departure, the rebel group had arrived and began pouring abuse on the Buddha statue before they had begun to fire shots.

"Where are the Americans?" They asked the villagers who had replied that they had left the previous day. Soon a Police jeep arrived and before the rebels could activate their Galkatas (home made pistols), the Police had shot and killed them.

Our Belgian group had encountered vehicles with special security protection, carrying army personnel and other passengers. Having explained matters to them, they went to Puttalam where they almost starved and then finally came back to Meth Medura. Mr. Rennie Geerts, head of the Belgium Sarvodaya group and Mrs. Van Voyanbrook, an owner of a textile company, were among them. Had something happened to this group, it would have been a disgrace to our country. So, at a special family gathering, I praised the malli who had gone as their guide.

H. Somaratne malli, our first full-time Sarvodaya worker was then in charge of Halmillawewa village. I was very disturbed because the lack of news about him. Actually, in the height of rebel activity he had shut himself in the village office at Halmillawewa doing his farming chores. After the troubles subsided, he visited us, much to our relief.

"We were so worried about you, Somaratne malli. Why didn't you send a message?" I asked. His reply was, "In critical times like this, rather than rushing about, the best thing is to stay where you are and do something useful."

This kind of conduct went a long way in preserving the lives of our full-time Sarvodaya workers.



Photo 360:
Mr. H. Somaratne

Bidding Ayubowan to Nalanda

I loved the teaching profession and worked my hardest to be a good teacher. But a teacher's primary duty is not to just teach a subject but to awaken the personality of the student through the subject.

By the 1960s, the realization had come to me that the full flowering of a child's personality could not be achieved just through books, in the class room, or by exams alone. I decided to use the existing educational system to heal the ills within. My massive Shramadana network was the result of this decision. I was aided in executing it by the Nalanda College head at that time, Mr. Karunananda, and Mr. Ariyananda Abeysekera of the Rural Development Dept.

I could sense that, by 1971, there would be bloodshed in the country, resulting in the death of hundreds of youth. The only medium to avert this catastrophe was the non-violent Sarvodaya revolution. The Leftist Movement had enlightened the country over three decades about the militant class struggle. Yet our efforts for non-violent transformation had not reached parallel proportions due to a lack of maturity and experience.

My aim became focused on preserving the lives of those living in our villages. Every attempt I made to meet the rebel leader, Rohana Wijeweera had failed. The revolution took place. It proved to be a failure. But a multitude of youthful lives were sacrificed in its cause in 1971. My attempt to take two years leave without pay from my profession to invest full time in Sarvodaya work also got aborted. Letters carrying my plea to the Minister of Education and the Prime Minister, sent by our Executive Council got no response. Many big-wigs even appealed on my behalf, but the bureaucracy remained impervious.

I resolved to develop the Sarvodaya Movement even while remaining as a teacher and to make Sarvodaya an integral part of our education system. But there were obstacles to this plan, too. So in 1972, I decided to quit the Nalanda College staff.

After Mr. Karunananda was transferred in 1961 to Ananda as its principal, Mr. K.M.W. Kuruppu replaced him. But due to the influence of the Education Ministry, we had unpleasant relations. However, I harboured no ill-will against him and later gave him all the co-operation necessary to run the school. Later, after he retired, I even got him a job as the Administrative Secretary of the Sarvodaya Bhikku Training Centre, handling our community leadership activities.

The subsequent principals, Mr. D.J. Edirisinghe, Mr. Gunapala Wickremaratne and Mr. Sugunadasa Atukorale were all very good friends of mine. Actually, it was during Mr. Wickremaratne's administration that Nalanda's re-awakening took place due to his vision. Mr. Atukorale also had a humble and serious personality. Having courted the good will of the Education Ministry, he was responsible for the construction of many college buildings. Both of these men patronised the Sarvodaya Movement, the heart of which was securely entrenched in the House Under the Breadfruit Tree at that time.

By that time, those in the Education Ministry who had suspended us and broken into our classrooms and had made scathing log entries and had forbidden us from taking students to "out-caste" villages, had been transferred to other places. The officers who remained, gave us due support and appreciated our work. Now there was no challenge and that made life very uninteresting for me.

Further, the youth massacre of 1971 had deeply disturbed me. It was a tragedy of gigantic dimensions. I decided to substitute my teaching profession for that of a community educator. I distributed half of my final salary among the staff who had helped me in various ways. Then I went home. At Meth Medura, about 20 people besides those of my immediate family had been sustaining themselves on my salary. That day, I had only 600 rupees with me. After

17 years of service, I had come home with only that. How was I going to manage the future? I was not entitled to a pension either.

When I was informed that a friend had come to see me, I walked into the drawing room. This friend told me that his salary was coming in another two days and that some tiles were required immediately to cover the roof of his house and he wanted to borrow 500 rupees. I explained to him the predicament I was in but he persisted and borrowed 500 rupees, promising to return it within two days, but he never did.

After he left, I fell asleep and got up in the night. There was bread and sambol for dinner. After dinner, I went on scribbling something. Then I heard a toot of a horn outside the gates. I opened the gates and a white lady emerged from a hired vehicle. She said that she had come directly from Katunayaka airport and was scheduled to take another plane to Geneva the next day. She also said that she did not know my telephone number so she could not ring before coming and apologised for the trouble. I teased her saying, "Who would shut the doors on such a beautiful visitor at midnight?" and took her in and introduced her to Neetha. She ate the left over bread and a banana and had a cup of tea. She had brought along with her a typed copy of a speech that I had made at a World Health Organization Conference in Geneva on "The Ten-fold Basic Needs" and asked my permission to publish it in a magazine.

I signed, giving permission, and in turn she gave me a receipt to sign and a cheque for 500 dollars saying it was for the article. I told her that that money would go to feed our Sarvodaya workers for some months. That incident acted as an armour against any fear I had harboured about the economic survival of Sarvodaya. When, according to Dhamma, I activate myself through sheer selflessness, the *dhmma shakthi* (energy of the truth) generated will fill my needs. My belief in that was reinforced by this incident.

Now invitations began to flow in for me from various international organizations, such as UNDP, WHO, FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF, the European Parliament, the German Government and a whole host of Universities and other institutions. They would fund my travel, my accommodation, and other expenses. I was invited

in a variety of roles – as a teacher, specialist, consultant and visiting professor. So began my universal work. Now I was earning many times my salary as a school teacher. So I covered my family expenses with a little of this money and invested the rest in the Movement.

On March 3, 1972, I sent the following letter to Mr. Sugunadasa Athukorale, head of Nalanda. On receiving the letter, he felt very sad and refused to send me a reply accepting my resignation of my post. Even at the cost of his own job, he would not issue me such a letter, he told me later. Hence he delegated the responsibility to the Education Ministry. Even there, since no one took on the onus and since no “letter of vacation of post” was issued to me, I hold a Special Grade 1 teacher’s post even now!

Years later, when Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe was the Minister of Education, I attended a prize-giving at Nalanda College headed by him. There, in my speech I said that my letter of resignation has still not been accepted by the Education Ministry, making me eligible for a pension and therefore I intend to go to court about this matter. That last fact I mentioned lightly. The Minister laughed at what I said.

The letter I sent to the Nalanda College Principal is as follows.

A.T.Ariyaratne
Sarvodaya Headquarters
Meth Medura
77, De Soysa Road
Moratuwa, 18.3.72

Principal
Nalanda College
Colombo 10

Dear Sir.

Alert to the day to day degeneration of our Lankan society in the moral and non-violent arenas, I have concluded that it is through the Sarvodaya Movement alone that a retrieval process can be executed. Therefore since I have decided to work full time to expand my village Re-awakening Movement from the present 400 to 1000, I wish to inform you that I will cease to function as a teacher of Nalanda.

2. Since within our Education Ministry there exists no legal provision to allow a person working selflessly for the country and world he is born into, to grant even a mere two years leave, of a no-pay leave, I have decided to resign voluntarily. I took this action so you can now take legal action and suspend my work. Maybe history would later provide the legal infrastructure to grant such pleas.
3. Please return my March pay to the Department.
4. I will always appreciate the co-operation extended to me by the principal, staff colleagues, and students of Nalanda College who helped me to begin and develop a Movement that has earned the acclaim of the whole world. Even in the future I would always participate in any work contributory to Nalanda welfare.
5. I hope and pray that Nalanda would continue to contribute to the good of the world by continuing training a student generation in an ethos tempered by correct attitudes and the Buddhist way of living.

Once again bestowing merit on you, the staff and students for all your co-operation, I say ayubowan.

Your affectionately,
A. T. Ariyaratne
Asst. Teacher,
Nalanda College, Colombo.
Regd no. 702126

Where Are the Intellectuals? An Intellectual in a Frenzy

The year 1971 was the opening year of Sarvodaya Headquarters at Meth Medura, and within 3 or 4 years after the place became very popular. Not only did common citizens visit us but prominent politicians, officers and community leaders as well, invited or uninvited.

The Sarvodaya Singithi Seva Unit (unit for children) was also burgeoning at this time under the guidance of Mrs. Leela Jayasekera. Mrs. Sumana Ratnayake was gaining fame not only as a Singithi Seva instructress but as a youth leader as well and often represented our Movement at various meetings and discussions held in Colombo.

One day, Sumana handed me a telephone number and an address of a woman who was an active member of a prominent women's organization. She had requested me to give her a call and

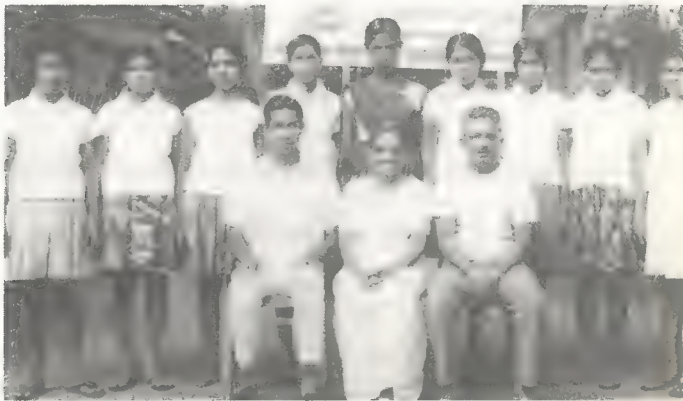


Photo 361.1:

With the first batch of trained pre-school teachers Mr. Balasuriya, Mrs. Leela Jayasekera and I.



Photo 361.2:
With Mrs. Leela Jayasekera

tell her when a suitable day would be for her to visit Sarvodaya Headquarters.

I rang the number and at the other end, a gruff male voice answered.

"That cannot be my wife," began the voice, "I am her husband. Why would she make a request to come to Sarvodaya? Who is there to speak to her? Sarvodaya has no intellectuals. It is a mistake."

I felt not anger but a deep sense of pity for the man who made that statement, made in English, "Sarvodaya has no intellectuals."

"That is true" I said, "Sarvodaya has no intellectuals because we have no need of them. Sorry for bothering you."

I put down the receiver. A few days later, at a conference held at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute (SLFI) by the World Assembly of Youth, Prof. Johan Galtung, Founder of the Peace Research Institute at Oslo in Norway and I delivered two lectures, in that sequence.

During the discussions, a thin moustached person stood up and commented in a rather mean way that there was no intellec-

tual content in either speech. Coming down from the stage, I inquired who he was.

"A swollen headed foolish pundit" remarked one person while another observed that the man's head was bursting with rubbish and that his mind was deformed and that his own identity had yet to be found. Somehow, of course, I found his actual identity.

Days later, I had to attend a meeting at Maha Iluppalama on an invitation by the Mahaweli Board. I planned to stay the previous night at Kumbukgollawa and go there the next day. On the way, I went to ascertain the venue and inquired from a gentleman in a bungalow there. He looked at me and did not answer and I realized it was the same man who had made that comment at the SLFI. The next day also he avoided me.

Weeks later, I learned that he had held a secret session at the SLFI on Sarvodaya and had prepared a sort of a memorandum on it where he had indicated that Sarvodaya had nothing profound to offer and that it was only a conduit for getting foreign aid. I published a reply to this entitled, "Reply from a Conduit" and distributed it.

The last time I saw this person was in the auditorium of the Central Bank, at a seminar on the White Paper on Education, headed by Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe. The Governor of Central Bank, Dr. Warnasena Rasaputram, also participated. This intellectual came and sat on the chair next to me and I handed him two books on Sarvodaya. He asked me whether to put them in the waste paper basket there or to take them home and put them in the waste paper basket at home. 'Don't take them home,' I said and took back the books.

I was given a turn to speak before him. In his script, I had noticed high flown English words like 'paradigm' and 'scenario.' In my speech, I referred to these words and said it was better to have a discussion on the White Paper with school teachers, par-



Photo 362:
Prof. Johan Galtung

ents and community leaders of the village rather than with the so-called intellectuals who used words like these which would not be understood by very many. Later, in his speech which turned out to be a failure, I found these words missing.

Subsequently, I learned that he had been dismissed from State service after he had made a drawing which looked similar to that of Buddha which he ridiculed in one of his magazines. Actually, I did not know anything about this at the time but he went around saying that his dismissal was a result of a manoeuvre of mine. Now he had really found an excuse to insult me. I heard about him last in 1999 when he was going around on world trips paid for by foreign funds. In Los Angeles, he had spoken at a Buddhist Society and said that Sarvodaya was antithetical to Buddhism. It was Ven. Walpola Piyananda Thero who told me that. The venerable had forbidden him to step into his temple after that remark.

So we have to tolerate misdemeanours sprouting out of deformed minds as we go about doing our good work.

Again to the Philippines

When I went to Philippines in 1969 to receive the Ramon Magsaysay Award, I was invited to deliver lectures in various universities, high schools and institutions. These lectures became very popular due to the pre-publicity as well as to the fact that these lectures were dealing with such subjects as human freedom and rights, the elimination of economic exploitation, the shedding of neo-colonialism, and facing these changes with non-violent armour and with a spiritual base.

The people of the Philippines who had been deprived of democratic rights under the iron rule of President Ferdinand Marcos loved my speeches. Filipinos are devout Catholics and always prefer non-violent techniques to violent techniques.

The schools in the Philippines are held in three sessions due to the lack of space. Sometimes, schools are in session till 12 midnight. Even those school children were audience to my speeches. When I went to the Philippines in August 1969, almost every island had made a request to the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation for a speech of mine. But since our stay was limited to one week, I could not oblige everybody. So I informed Miss Belen Abreu that if I were invited again, I would come and therefore, from November 18th to December 10th of 1971, I went there again.

Dr. Hudson Silva, having come to know of my Philippine journey, asked me to act as a courier and to take four eyes to the Philippines. I agreed. Dr. Silva was an old Nalandian and began his Eye-Donation Scheme while at Medical College. This scheme soon blazed trails all over the world. From the eyes he sent from Sri Lanka for cornea grafting, thousands all over the world could see again. So I wanted to be a participant in this meritorious act.

On November 18, 1971, I flew by Swissair (leased by Air Lanka) to Singapore, carrying with me the four eyes given by Dr. and Mrs. Hudson Silva. It was 10.30 p.m. when I reached Singapore airport. Mr. Johnny Tan, a friend of mine since 1967, had come to receive me. Mr. Johnny was then working as an instructor in the Bouna Vista Youth Training Centre in Singapore, after completing a training session at the Labour Training Centre of Histadrut in Israel. My friend, an Israeli, Mr. Ariye Levie, who designed the National Youth Council in Sri Lanka, was then working as the Head of the Singapore Youth Organization. Mr. Johnnie Tan took me to the Equatorial Hotel for dinner.



Photo 363:
Dr. Hudson Silva

I flew to Manila airport on the 19th afternoon in a plane belonging to Philippines Airways. In Singapore, I had deposited the parcel with the four human eyes into a freezer in the hotel and when I slept I kept having a hallucination that their owners may come in search of them. In the plane, the box was always on my lap.

The next day, as I descended the flight of steps from the plane, there stood Madam Belen Abreu, the Executive Director of Magsaysay Foundation with garlands and Miss Ellen Aquino, the co-ordinator of my trip. With them were Mr. and Mrs. N.N.M.I. Hussein, in charge of our embassy, and an officer named Jayaraja. While the delegates of the Eye Bank garlanded me, I handed the parcel to them. From there I was taken to Bay View Hotel for a rest. At 6.00 pm. I went to Magsaysay Award Foundation office and where they gave me the programme for the 3 weeks .

After dinner, I was left alone in my dream world in Room No. 37 of the 8th floor of the Bay View Hotel. When I came there in 1969, Neetha had provided me with companionship. Now she, a mother of 3, could not join me. The chief mission of this trip was to deliver a lecture at a Conference held by the Magsaysay Foundation and the FAO. To Belen Abreu's question of whether

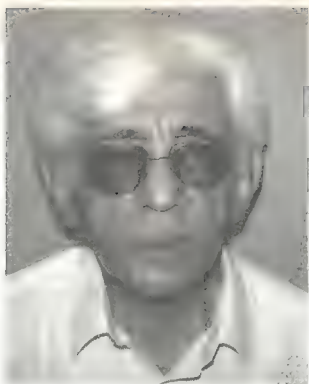


Photo 364:
Mr. N.N.M.I. Hussain, our
Ambassador in the Philippines

my speech was ready, I replied that if she could give me some papers that I would type out the salient facts. Belen is a soft-spoken lady. She agreed and soon everything was ready for typing.

My programme overwhelmed me. It was a melange of lectures, workshops, conferences, convocations, lunches, dinners and receptions. I was expected to visit almost every island. Would I have time to produce my monograph? The next day, dinner was at the Ambassador's residence. From the hotel, Mr. Lionel Henry and Jayaraja took me to the Hussain home. Mrs. Angela Hussain was quite different from the person I expected. She was dressed very simply like any Sinhala rural woman. Their daughter was the age of my daughter and she and her elder brother and mother welcomed me lovingly.

When I was taken back to the Bay View Hotel, Mr. Henry volunteered to type my monograph, saying that he was already a Sarvodaya disciple. My lectures which were sponsored by the World Assembly of Youth were held in two places, one under the patronage of the World University Service and the other under that of Mrs. Lulu Manuel Quezon. Lulu, whose acquaintance I had cultivated in Liege in Belgium, had married 3 months before, to the son of an ex-president of Philippines, Mr. Quezon. She praised my work a lot while we exchanged experiences and ideas. On the invitation of Mr. Henry, I had dinner with his wife Wimala and kids. He also typed my monograph.

I had had only two hours of sleep at this time. While I was doing my work in the hotel, Henry and Wimala brought meals for me.

From the 22nd onward, I had no rest. Ellen Aquino would come early in the morning and take me to about four schools and Universities. I spoke in these places on such topics as "What is True Education?," "Roles of Students in National Development," and "Character Formation." In the meantime, the Magsaysay



Photo 365:
Delivering speeches non-stop in Philippines

Foundation would entertain small groups at lunch, after which I used to expound the Sarvodaya philosophy to them.

Some students questioned me about the Foundation and the award after my lectures, to which I gave suitable replies. To one student group, rather vociferous, I delivered a lecture on "Voluntary Revolution" which was a big hit. I delivered a public lecture at the Asian Social Institute too. Special seminars were organized by the Freedom from Hunger Committee and the Nutrition Foundation.

Before I proceeded to other islands, I took part in a Conference organized by the FAO and the Magsaysay Foundation. Ms. Belen had, by now, printed and distributed my monograph but I delivered my lecture without any references to it.

Many used their eyes to read the text and not their ears. When you speak to an audience directly, the emotions of both the speaker and the audience become intertwined. At national or international gatherings, at conferences, seminars and workshops I always speak directly and without notes. By doing so, I can mould my ideas to the listener's expectations and responses. Otherwise, the audience would go to sleep.

From then until now, I always have a tape recorder in front of me when I give a speech. So our archives are replete with hun-

dreds of audio tapes. Because of Prof. Nandasena Ratnapala's interest, some of these speeches have been compiled into seven volumes and published by Vishva Lekha. The speech I made in November 1971 on the social, economic and political condition of Asia is an extremely revolutionary one, I now realize. Many people are reluctant even now to proclaim such views.

Only the introduction to that speech is presented in the next chapter. Those desirous of reading the full text should consult the above compilation.

One day with our Ambassador and the doctors from the Eye Bank, I visited the recipients of the eyes I had brought. Among them was a young woman who shouted when the bandage covering her eyes was removed, "I can see now! Now I can see!"

Even now, remembering that incident, I get a wave of happiness.

After the conference, I visited all the capitals in the islands with a person called Mr. Anglo. Physically, he was of the same height and build as me with a large forehead and a round face. He was also of the same age. A very kind man, he looked after all my needs and even carried my bags. When we were staying at the Insular Hotel in Davao City, I decided to photograph the more scenic places around there and he took me to such places. I remember Major Ondo, too, a retired army officer, who worked as our driver and our security man. One day he was in such a hurry to get me into the vehicle that while I was having a bath, he had put all my bags into the vehicle. Wrapped in a towel, I had to send a message to the car to bring my clothes back.

Davao is inhabited by Roman Catholics. So when I had the chance to visit a Buddhist vihara in that setting, I was truly amazed. It was a massive structure which was built according to Chinese architecture and was shown to me by a Chinese monk. I made my obeisance to the placid Buddha statue, about 5 feet in height. The statues of the two chief disciples of the Buddha, too, were pleasing. I recited pansil, and the Karaniya Metta Sutta and meditated and conferred merit on my dead relatives and the gods. My last wish was to transform my country into a Dhammadveepa.

Behind this image house was another image house that exhibited statues and art forms akin to Mahayana Buddhism. The statues were of Bodhisattvas. From there, we went on to Mindanao University where I delivered a lecture to the staff and students and then conducted a question and answer session. Dr. Fidel had organized it. I remember an incident that occurred there. A youth of about 20 told me that he was a revolutionary but that he got more and more disenchanted daily with militancy and hence found my speech very useful. He wanted me to send him some Sarvodaya literature. He was Reynold Ledesma, and he was the Vice President of the University student body.

Mr. Anglo was a person of tranquil ways, and yet he could get riled up. We reached the city of Cayagan de Oro by plane in about 30 minutes. We nearly boarded the wrong plane. The plane flew at 16000 feet, soaring above an enchanting panorama of nature, with alternating views of mountains and valleys.

I came there on the invitation of Father Masterson of the world famous Searsolin Institute. When we arrived, two women garlanded us and took us to the VIP Hotel. After a meal, we attended a Rotary meeting. After a lecture there, I made a public speech at Xavier University also known as Searsolin Campus. Later, I was able to procure training here for our youth such as Harsha Navaratne.

It was also here that I read the famous book, *Doctor in the Barrio* by Dr. Juan Flavio of the Philippines, who was also a Senator. We slept in the room allotted to visiting Professors. It was the first day we slept in the same room and here a rather amusing incident occurred. Mr. Anglo suggested going to sleep with the lights on. I agreed and read the book until he fell asleep and after that, switched off the lights.

We went to see a pineapple estate which covered 100 acres, 18 miles off the city of Cayagan de Oro, belonging to the Philippines Packing Company. Here I got some insight into the class distinctions existing in that country. The difference between the rich and the poor was exhibited by the conditions of the abodes of the administrators and those of the working class. Yet, the peo-

ple seemed happy and organized. We visited schools, churches, sports grounds, hospitals, farms.

American investors there lived in large mansions. I saw a Filipino girl looking after an American baby in such a mansion. I also saw a company who bought cattle from poor people and bludgeoned and butchered them for sale. The butchers wore tattered clothes.

The Del Monte farm where fruits such as passion fruit and bananas were cultivated, using highly technological methods, impressed me. We could see the blue ocean from the farm. Along the beach were large factory houses that canned pineapple for export to America. A large ship had anchored and around it were small boats. A mass of fishermen's huts dotted the beach.

Here I had to take part in a TV programme. I was not aware that it had already begun. The programme monitor asked three people, including a Senator, where Sri Lanka was. One answered "in the Carribean." Another woman said that it is an island to the South of India. Then he turned to me and asked why we have chosen a woman as Prime Minister. I quipped that at that time she turned out to be the best male. My reply made everybody laugh.

My longest lecture on this journey was the one delivered in the Agriculture section of Searsolin University to about 150 students. The topic was "Non-violent Social Revolution." We spent about 3 hours there. I felt very exhausted when I returned to Manila. Yet, there too, I delivered a speech based on Dasa Paramitha (the ten perfections), and highlighting the similarities between Buddhism and Christianity.

Coming back to Manila from the lovely rural terrain, I felt I had entered a lunatic asylum. The smoke emitting from thousands of vehicles was asphyxiating and the noise deafening. I soon developed a headache.

The next day at Bagio University I made a speech on "How a Person Can be Changed Through University Education" and followed it with a discussion.

Bagio is a fine small town. Many earn their living via handicrafts, agriculture and basket weaving. They were critical of

the Americans who exploit the gold mines in Bagio and sought my advice on the issue.

Here too I visited a Chinese temple.

Though I was very tired, I delivered lectures at St. Louis University, co-operative establishments, community development institutes, high schools, small schools, community training centres, medical colleges and technical institutes. About 2000 people attended each of these lectures. At one of these meetings, I met a Catholic nun named Sister Mendis and a Catholic priest named Father Perera who were both proud of my speeches. Among the Sri Lankans I met in Manila on this tour was Mr. Kingsley T. Wickremaratne who was the President of Jaycees.

My wish to rest at least one day in Manila was never fulfilled. As if conducting election meetings, I spoke in each place for about 5 to 10 minutes, gaining a lot of affection. It was a testimony of the honour they accorded to a Magsaysay Award winner. Even mayors and police chiefs attended these meetings.

In the schools, I used storytelling, particularly in the Primary classes to convey a message, and this was a technique that appealed to many. Eventually, I forgot that I was on foreign soil. Just as in Sri Lanka, I looked at my audience directly and spoke.

By this time, I was cognizant of the fact that Filipinos would soon demonstrate People's Power to their ruler. The Filipinos are very devout Christians. Cardinal Sin, the head of their church, was totally equipped to be their spiritual leader. The multitude of Catholic Reverends I met possessed a clear vision for the transformation of their society into a non-violent democratic society, freed from the manacles of political and economic dictatorship. I felt that they were all set to retrieve their country from President Marcos's rule.

Mobilization of Private Philanthropy in Asia for Rural Development

This is the introduction to a one hour speech I made in Manila.

“I come from a village in Sri Lanka. Most of my time I spend with my brothers and sisters in the countryside. My ideas and attitudes as well as my voluntary rural work are thoroughly affected by those rural people who are considered ‘outsiders’ by the dominant ‘modernizers’ inhabiting our country. At the risk of being called names such as ‘reactionary,’ ‘idealist,’ or even ‘communist,’ I believe that I should speak my people’s language in this talk that I am asked to deliver. Those rural people are “outsiders” in the eyes of the decision-making establishment though without them there can be no nation. And what they speak is common sense, though in very ‘blunt’ language.

Asia lived and lives in the villages. However, today she is tutored by the city. For many years to come, Asia will remain rural. In the past, the city was but a refined version of rural values, prosperity and aspirations. Today it is the reverse. The



Photo 366:
Addressing the International Conference of Manila

Asian city, whose values reflect the remains of a colonial past, and whose lifestyle is that of an imported, confused, industrial society based on mass consumption, dominates the rural communities.

In the past, rural Asia was nurtured by living examples of saints and respected elders. There was a harmonious integration of objectives and methods related to the organization of man and matter, and the common goal was to ensure the joy of living for all. Even powerful war-lords at that time bowed down to the values set by those standard-bearers of the Asian culture.

The colonizers came and imposed their 'superior' values, their refined methods and techniques, and their sophisticated institutions on our people. Most of them have removed themselves physically from Asia, carrying with them their spoils. Yet to fill the void created, they left behind as overlords of their former colonies, people chosen from among the indigenous people who were 'educated' in their ways. An establishment built up over the centuries by the colonizers was left behind, creating a sense of authority as well as an illusion of freedom. The authority of the ancient saints and elders was no more.

These modern masters call themselves the 'elite.' They are found in every walk of life: in politics, in business, in diplomacy, in economic planning and implementation, in the professions and in what they call rural development, too. These 'elite' live between the two worlds that they have identified and labelled 'the developing' and 'the developed.' They work in multi-storied, air-conditioned, concrete buildings situated on the busy streets of cities in preference to the quiet solitude of the rural areas. They are undoubtedly a bridge between the 'developed' and the 'undeveloped' people and their temples of planning maintain an overall view of both.

The 'elite' though all belonging to the same establishment, have become specialized in particular disciplines. Sometimes they have rifts and quarrels among themselves as to who should bear the blame for problems, and which group of political 'elite' which bureaucratic clique or which economic enterprise is to be held responsible. These quarrels are short lived and are soon for-

gotten. The establishment or the partnership must not perish. Meanwhile, the common rural masses are kept at a safe distance, living in the hope of a better tomorrow and even brighter future.

These 'elite' who constitute a negligible fraction of the masses of Asia, think they know exactly what those outside the establishment need and aspire to. So they plan for them, and at most times act on their behalf, particularly at national and international levels. Rural people, in their helplessness, disorganization or confusion, and amidst their busy day-to-day struggle to eke out an existence at a subsistence level, place trust in those 'elite' and their plans, even though they may not understand how these plans were really formed.

These 'elite' champion the cause of the 'rural poor' and their more enterprising and desperate brethren who have migrated to the city slums. Through a language and logic understandable only to such 'enlightened' persons, they often persuade governments, institutions and persons of the 'developed world' to come to the aid of their poor people. The local 'elite' have mastered the economic and political jargon which help them to successfully negotiate these master aid programmes. Out of gratitude, they are even ready to make political and economic concessions to the 'developed world'. The rule is that the lines of communication between these 'elite' of so-called developing countries and their counterparts in the developed nations must be very clear and in good working order whilst no concern is felt for the vast disparities that exist between the 'elite' and the rural masses for whom they are supposedly acting. Among the 'elite' from time to time there exists the odd-man-out, the non-conformist, who in the course of time gets excommunicated from the established order when he becomes too much of a nuisance.

The effective partnership between the 'elite-receiver' and 'developed-giver' very often results in 'model projects' and even 'model nations' amidst appalling poverty and chaotic political crisis. We are told that these models are the ones to pursue and that they are the results of the correct approach by a joint endeavour or partnership for and on behalf of the 'starving millions of Asia'. And, it is the 'elite' who set the values and stan-

dards for these models. The common ignorant people have only to acknowledge and admire the new elite-saint and reaffirm their faith in them. Of course some of the more enterprising and capable among the common people are provided with incentives to aspire to be 'developed' in the same manner as this elite.

Some rural people are 'stupid.' They question the goals, the objectives, the plans and the techniques of the development advocated by the 'elite.' Grounded as they are in the traditional past, they refuse the kind of future which the 'elite' ask for their co-operation to create. They are then said to fall far short of the expected norms of hard work, obedience, orderliness and discipline. They question the managerial competence of those who direct the system. They even doubt the very integrity of most of the elite and question the knowledge such people profess to have of the rural problems.

It is their superstition and ignorance that makes rural people question the 'elite' - the managers of political, educational, commercial, military, administrative, technocratic and planning institutions at different levels. After all, the 'elite' say, it is they who give purpose and stability to these nations even though they have no magical formula to solve all problems of the developing world. The 'elite' also ask questions: "Wouldn't there be complete chaos and disorder if we, the "decision-making" elite, were stripped of our power and the masses were allowed to develop their own common goals, objectives and the means to realize them?" Also, "Shouldn't the masses, not by themselves but through their sons and daughters (one per cent of whom can be assured of a university education), make a serious attempt to understand the problems of modern economic planning and growth?" (even though these are couched in the unintelligible language of the expert?)

The 'elite' assert that the 'developed world,' for example, Western Europe, had to work hard for many centuries before they received the present day per capita income of US\$ 1250. Why can't the younger generation wait in some countries for another forty-five years at least to reach this level? They have only to work hard and be patient to increase the current annual

growth rate of 2.1 to 5% with the 'elite' advising them. In the scheme of things, isn't 45 years a negligibly short period?

But the 'youth' are even more stupid than their elders. The stupidity of the elders is tolerable but the uneducated, inexperienced, turbulent youth, are a threat to our whole elite establishment and to the whole civilized world. They have been made literate at the public expense and we, the elite, were responsible for making this investment. Yet, the youth are ungrateful and revolt. The frustration brought about by mass unemployment and under-employment is the result of the foreign exchange crisis.' Why can't the youth wait?

Then the youths say 'All right, we will wait. But, you wait too, and your kith and kin as well.' Naturally, the 'elite' are not prepared to do this. They don't believe that any good can come from waiting and inhibiting their march of 'progress.'

These 'misled immature youth' sometimes take to violence. In this, they are harming themselves and others. They have to be stopped for their own good and the good of society. coercive force which protected the colonial rulers from the conquered people has now to be brought in to protect the 'elite' from the onslaught of youth. Of course, this has to be done in the name of the good of the social order. Otherwise, the people will identify the 'elite' as similar in character to their departed colonial masters. On the other hand, how can they bring about development when there is disorderliness and violence?

At normal times, the 'elite' quarrel among themselves. But their language is unintelligible to the common people. Reality for the common people lies in action and in the integrity of the people who act. Generally, the 'elite' have loyalties which are divided between different benefactors from different parts of the world. The benefactors have created three worlds. They call them the First World, the Second World and the Third World. The rural masses of Asia, Africa and Latin America are said to be in this Third World. One outcome of this labeling is that our 'elite' are seen as the representatives of the masses of the Third World. It is they who think for the masses, speak for them, receive loans and aid for them, implement development projects

and welfare programmes for them, report successes and failures on their behalf, pay back loans for them and finally assure them of better times to come.

Sometimes that group of 'elite' called party-politicians take their quarrels to the rural areas. People are asked to pass judgement on the issues about which they quarrel by making a cross on a ballot paper during the elections. This happens once in four or five years. Depending on who wins, a few people in the village receive rewards. Others go back to the slow process of repairing the damage caused to the human and developmental relationships in the village by the 'elections'. That group of 'elite' who run the administration perpetually control the system, but those who lean too far towards the 'wrong' faction of political 'elite' are replaced by others more acceptable to the political 'elite' who happen to be in power at the time.

And rural life goes on. Sometimes 'elite' who have demonstrated their capability in strategic areas of the establishment are promoted to international development institutions. Sometimes they descend upon the rural area to inspire the "still backward village people." And still life goes on. But some people, as I mentioned before, question the very 'elite' approach to progress and development. They demand a total change in this approach where they too can play a decisive role in matters which primarily concern their life and death. They want to participate as equals in the management of their affairs and in development. They may not be totally right but they are not totally wrong either. In any case, these rural people for whom the establishment is said to be acting, are numerically very strong. It may be worth giving them a chance to prove themselves since the establishment may not be wholly right. I don't like to call these 'elite' the privileged. I know how difficult it is for them to give away the 'decision-making role' they have played on behalf of the poor ignorant masses for such a long time. I also know that many of them are fighting a big battle within themselves between the demands of the organization and their own conscience, and between their traditional pride and the hypocrisy of the system.

I often ask rural people directly what happens outside of their area. They appear to know more than the 'elite' think they are capable of knowing. They know how humans exploit each other. They know how humans kill each other and ruin nature. They know how man deceives man and tries to deceive nature too. They know how man intoxicates man for mutual destruction. The rural mother is horrified to see 'developed' nations become brutes, filled with untruth, violence, and selfishness. She knows the simple truth that it is useless developing the world if there is no development of the humanity in man.

The development she sees being practised today is a headlong thrust into an abyss of total destruction. The philosophy of rural people cannot be ignored in the name of an impersonal science and technology. On the contrary, in the very unsophisticated simplified thinking of the rural people may lie the path to the integration of the 'elite' into the real life of the people, not as their masters but as an integral part of their culture. A rural mother's feeling for man loving man, man sharing with man, man ennobling man, man sacrificing for man and man enlightening man is the base from which we have to start. We may have to turn a full circle, but it has to be done. People refuse to be subject to the so-called modern establishment over which a human beings has no control however much of an 'elite' he may be. This self-realization combined with self-determination and self-respect, I believe, has to be the foundation on which Asian rural development programmes will be built. My talk is only a humble attempt to examine this possibility based on my own experience in rural work."

Mr. Piet Dijkstra

The 1960s was a decade in which the Sarvodaya philosophy and Sarvodaya techniques were firmly established in our country. My knowledge of international politics and economics also increased during this period. This deepening of my knowledge and experience was a result of my frequent visits to India and other countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, Israel, England, Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, America and France. I visited these countries in the capacity of lecturer at a myriad of conferences and workshops. But it was in my capacity as an Executive Member of the World Assembly of Youth in Brussels that I gained my most significant practical experience. This was gained through meetings held at the World Assembly headquarters and through my participation in its various programs.

The Secretary-General of this Assembly at this time was a 30-year-old Indian man named Jyoti Shanker Singh. He was a short man yet strongly built, and he was the commander-in-chief of this mighty organization. Married to a Spanish lady named Barbara, he had two cute little sons. His deputy was Mr. Piet Dijkstra, a resident of the beautiful village of Bergen, in the out-



Photo 367:
With Mr. Piet Dijkstra

skirts of the city of Alkmar in the Netherlands. He and his very energetic wife, Vrennie, had a son and a daughter. Vrennie worked as both a housewife and as the driver of their Volkswagen car.

Piet was a peaceful man who always worked thoughtfully and according to Gandhian philosophy. He worked as an adviser to the community and in educational centres in the area. It was Piet who first invited me to Europe. Though he was a bit older than me, I remember him carrying my travelling bags and taking me sightseeing all over the Netherlands and Belgium. He taught me to view European society with equanimity. As a follower of Gandhi, he exerted a lot of energy to introduce the Sarvodaya concepts into Europe. It was he who was instrumental in getting me invited to deliver a lecture at the FAO World Food Conference held in Liege, Belgium. Further, it was his networking that afforded me a chance to address the European Parliament on the topic of Developing Countries in the World.

Though I had known Mr. Gerard Von Vlijman, the General Secretary of NOVIB Institute and his small staff, including his assistants Misses Rennie and Lia Nujens earlier, it was Piet Dijkstra who first took me to their office at Van Vlankenbergh Straat in Hague. In Belgium, Rennie Geerts and his cousin, Jaak



Photo 368:
With Mr. Piet Dijkstra at Meth Medura

Jansen acted as advocates for Sarvodaya and they were assisted by an active committee. It was Rennie who established a branch of Sarvodaya in Belgium. Even today, in the village of Balen, there is a road called Shramadana Road.

It was Piet Dijkstra who worked as the President and Chief Organizer of the Sarvodaya Society of Europe. He took me to the UNESCO organization in Paris and via the World Assembly of Youth, introduced the UNESCO Gift Coupon Program into the Sarvodaya

Movement. At that time, a Canadian lady by the name of Pat Mortimar was in charge of UNESCO Gift Coupon System. Piet Dijkstra also procured for us two brand new Land Rovers through the World Assembly of Youth.

Piet Dijkstra later joined the Frederich Neumann Foundation of the German Federal Republic and introduced me to that organization. It was while I was with him in Bonn, Germany that I met one of my closest friends, Mr. Chandra Soyza. Piet Dijkstra was the pioneer of the European Sarvodaya Movement and its Netherlands branch. He not only helped me to spread the Sarvodaya tentacles throughout Europe but alerted me to the danger of blindly adopting the development matrix of the European continent. Mr. Hoyt Purvis, editor of the magazine of the World Assembly of Youth, its Asian Secretary K.V. Reddy, and its legal officer, Hays Elder and his wife, all became my friends during this period. During the 1960s and 70s, Mr. Piet Dijkstra frequently visited our Sarvodaya Headquarters.

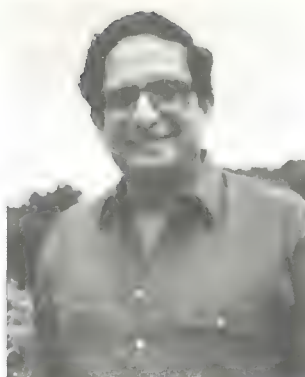


Photo 369:
Mr. Chandra Soyza

Ceylon's Pick-and-Shovel Samaritans

By EMILY AND OLA D'AULAIRE

'Moving mountains' is all in a day's work for Ari and his youthful volunteers

THE LOVELY island of Ceylon dangles from the southern tip of India like a giant pear. Nature is bountiful there and the country enjoys one of the higher standards of living in Asia. Yet more than 80 per cent of its 12 million people live in scattered rural villages, and a substantial proportion have been left far behind in

the country's advance towards modern development. There are people who still live in mud-floor huts, whose daily wage (when they can find work) comes to only 25p, and who are on intimate terms with disease and malnutrition.

In 1958, a teacher named Ahan-gamage Tudor Ariyaratne decided to do something about all this. At



October 1971
**Reader's
Digest**

Following is an article penned by Emile and Ola D'auraire and published in the 1971 October issue of the world famed Readers' Digest. In fact this is the first article to appear on Sri Lanka in this magazine. Since this article was published in several languages by the end of that year the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka emblazoned itself through out the world. I am reproducing this article in this text with the objective of highlighting the sequential steps along which our organization zoomed to international status.

Ceylon's Pick-and-Shovel Samaritans

‘Moving mountains’ is all in a day’s work for Ari and his youthful volunteers.

The lovely island of Ceylon dangles from the southern tip of India like a giant pear. Nature is bountiful there and the country enjoys one of the higher standards of living in Asia. Yet more than 80 per cent of its 12 million people live in scattered rural villages, and a substantial proportion have been left far behind in the country’s advance towards modern development. There are people who still live in mud-floor huts, whose daily wage (when they can find work) came to only 25p, and who are on intimate terms with disease and malnutrition.

In 1958, a teacher named Ahangamage Tudor Ariyaratne decided to do something about all this. At the time working in a secondary school in Colombo, Ceylon’s capital, he began a spare-time experiment to erase the grim hopelessness of some of his country’s most impoverished villagers. His experiment has snow-balled into a mass movement involving thousands of people. In 1969 he was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award, Asia’s most prestigious prize, given for service to the community, and has since been invited to speak in such far-off places as Canada, Belgium and the Philippines. People are beginning to call him the Gandhi of Ceylon.

To the casual observer, 39-year-old Ariyaratne (known to his friends as Ari) seems an unlikely candidate for international



Photo 370:
Mr. Mapa Ra Podi Appuhamy

honours. Just five feet two inches tall, he talks in a shrill, high-pitched voice, and when he laughs he giggles. But his large dark eyes shine with sincerity, and people listen when he speaks.

Sad Tale. The day it all began, Ari was taking a lesson. "I'd like to tell you about a village where 37 families are miserable, mainly because of an accident of birth," he told his pupils. The people belonged to one of the most socially depressed communities in Ceylon. Neighbouring villagers shunned them. Public places and employers often closed their doors to them. Many had to resort to begging.

"I think we can help these people," he said. "How many of you would be willing to give up your next holiday to try? After some hesitation, 30 young people raised their hands.

When the holidays came, the volunteers piled into a bus and headed for Kanatoluwa, 67 miles away. There Ari at once made it clear to the suspicious villagers that the team had come not to work for them, but *with* them. Then, as the astonished villagers watched, the city-bred volunteers took up picks and shovels and went to work. By the second day, every able-bodied member of the village was helping.

Whirlwind Effort. A startling transformation took place. With dozens of hands at work, 19 woven-bamboo huts were repaired and three latrines built. A well was dug and lined with brick, coconut seedlings were planted, vegetable gardens cultivated and a small-scale rattan-weaving industry established. In the evenings, Ari's volunteers held literacy classes, taught games to the young, basket weaving to the women, and basics of farming and uses of fertilizer to the men. They demonstrated the essentials of health, hygiene and nutrition.

When the volunteers departed, 11 days after their whirlwind arrival, they left the villagers with a sense of human dignity. "Until we showed them," Ari said, "it had not occurred to these people that they could do anything for themselves."

For Ari, however, the immediate result was the loss of his job. Although the parents of his volunteers had given permission for their children to participate in Ari's project, other parents were

shocked at the thought of youth from the privileged classes living and working with the “untouchables.” They brought pressure to bear, and Ari was suspended.

Ari took the loss of his livelihood with equanimity. “Try anything new and naturally one meets opposition,” he reasoned. His job now, as he saw it, was to break down class barriers, and to convince people of the need for rural development through self-help. “I don’t want to wipe out worthy old cultural values,” Ari told his detractors, “but we must add to them the new things that are good.”

Welcome Support. Ari explained his philosophy to all who would listen: newspaper editors, school authorities, legislators. Finally, news of his case reached the sympathetic ear of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Bandaranaike; convinced that an injustice had occurred, she ordered Ari’s reinstatement.

For Ari, the affair had been a blessing in disguise. Because of the attendant publicity, hundreds of volunteers – university students, young professionals, even unemployed youngsters – wrote asking how they, too, could take part in his programme. Meanwhile, pleas for assistance streamed in from backward villages. “I realized that I was on to something with tremendous potential,” Ari recalls. “The poor were calling for help, the young were begging to be involved. The only natural thing to do was bring these two groups together.”

Working late after school hours, Ari drew up the charter of a non-political, non-profit-making organization. He named it Sarvodaya Shramadana, the Sinhalese words for “Welfare for all” and “sharing of energy.” To give the new movement weight and respectability, he recruited 15 of Ceylon’s most prominent men, including the President of the Senate, to serve on an unpaid executive committee.

Soon the organization took on the proportions of a popular movement, as the pool of willing and able workers grew with astounding speed—to thousands, then tens of thousands.

Sarvodaya proved to be a master-piece of organizational efficiency. Volunteers provided their own transport, and the villagers supplied food and shelter. Money for materials and equipment was raised through contributions. People gave what they

could. One village woman donated 12½p – half a day's wages. Dock workers in the port of Colombo took a collection and handed over £10. But the chief asset remained the labour given by the volunteers. With nothing but the most basic of hand tools and massive manpower, Sarvodaya workers have succeeded where others have failed.

The 6,000 people of Epakanda, for example, badly needed a road. Their village was perched at the top of a steep mountain, accessible only by a narrow winding footpath that climbed 1,000 feet in half a mile. Government engineers said that it would be too costly to build a road in such country so, as a last resort, the villagers appealed to Sarvodaya.

"We'll start tomorrow," Ari announced after studying the problem. A visiting government official was astounded. "It's completely impossible," he sniffed. "You're only filling them with false hopes."

"Let's make a bet," Ari replied.

"If you can drive to the top within a month, you must arrange to have the road surfaced."

For the following four weekends, several hundred Sarvodaya volunteers, joined by over a thousand people from Epakanda and near-by villages, zig-zagged their way up the mountain, cutting into the steep hillside and constructing hairpin bends. Late into the night they could be seen, their lanterns flickering like giant fireflies against the hillside. Word spread about the bet, and villagers eagerly continued to work on week-days when Ari and his volunteers had returned to Colombo.

Four weeks later to the day, the sceptical official's car drove up to the town. "If you've moved a mountain to win some pavement," the official smiled, "I suppose I'd better keep my part of the bargain." Today a modern surfaced road leads all the way to Epakanda. The villagers call it Ari's "Highway to the Sky." And Ari himself they call "little Gandhi."

In fact, Ari had been strongly influenced by the great Indian nationalist, and has built his movement largely on Gandhian principles: community participation, personal sacrifice and non-violent action. "Violence only turns dreams into nightmares," he

asserts. "Non-violence, properly harnessed, is the true creative force of change."

By 1967 Sarvodaya had grown to be the largest voluntary organization in Ceylon, with over 100,000 workers on ready call. It was then that Ari decided to launch his "Hundred Villages Development Scheme," a plan for an integrated attack on all the economic and social ills of 100 very poor villages, with special emphasis on education. Like Ari's other projects, this, too, transformed the lives of thousands.

When Ari and his volunteers first went to the village of Uruwala, there was no road and no school. Living conditions were abominable and the disorganized villagers often quarrelled among themselves. Today, much has changed. With the new road that Sarvodaya volunteers helped the villagers build, the people can send their produce – coconut fibre and rice – to market, and fetch a good price.

Monthly family income has doubled – from £6 to about £12. And thanks to the new school and Sarvodaya-sponsored classes, the illiteracy rate in Uruwala has plummeted. "Sarvodaya has helped us discover our own abilities," one village elder says. "It has revolutionized our way of life."

Ari's numerous projects have pushed the operating expenses of Sarvodaya past £16,000 annually, and the need for more money keeps increasing. Fortunately, news of his work has made him some valuable new friends. Four years ago the World Assembly of Youth (WAY) decided to support the Hundred Villages Development Scheme as one of its major projects in Asia, and persuaded UNESCO to help. Nearly £30,000* has been raised throughout the world, to be used primarily for a community literacy programme and children's education through mobile libraries.

The Hundred Villages Development Scheme has already mushroomed to more than twice that number, and by Ari's reckoning it's only just begun. He hopes to have 500 villages organized for self-help projects by the end of 1972, and 1,000 by 1975.

*In 1968 the value of a £ was Rs. 13.00.

Nearly 100 combined school-community centres have been built and almost as many children's libraries opened. Five hundred miles of road have been constructed, usually through difficult terrain. In short, some 250,000 Sarvodaya volunteers have to date made a better life for approximately 40,000 of Ceylon's families—more than 350,000 people.

From the very beginning Ari has given every moment of his free time and a great deal of his meagre personal resources to Sarvodaya. Operations are directed from a cluttered office in a back alley in one of Colombo's most crowded bazaars. It is also Ari's home.

His wife, Neetha, and three children share with him a single tiny bedroom just off the office. Their kitchen is a hearth in the alley. But the family never complains. They are as deeply involved as Ari and go with him to all the work camps. Neetha cooks for the volunteers while the children teach games and songs to village youngsters.

"Ari combines a revolutionary's vision of a better society with a monk's patience and love for humanity," says Neetha. "He believes in the basic goodness of human beings – that if you tap them at the right point, they will respond."

A Serenade Ceremony

On my Philippines tour, an unforgettable incident took place in the village of Balanggebbon. We had been spent the whole day delivering lectures in schools and I was scheduled to spend the night with Mr. Anglo in a small log house. When we arrived there, it was quite dark and we could hardly see our surroundings. During that day, we had visited not only schools but teachers' colleges and community centres as well and I was very fatigued by it all. I got into bed without even a wash. I slept for about an hour when I was awakened by two female voices. On opening my eyes, I saw two women, like beauty queens, dressed in gorgeous clothes. They garlanded Mr. Anglo and me, making Mr. Anglo squirm with shyness. The women laughed out loud and said. "We welcome you to our house." They then lit lamps, showed us the the other rooms and where the chairs and the radio were and took us downstairs and showed us the bathrooms as well.

Actually, though it was a log house, the floor and walls were so highly polished that they gleamed like mirrors. Then we realized to what lengths they had gone to prepare that abode for us. Now the two young women closed all the doors and windows and told us not to open them till they returned. They also requested us to wear our best clothes, ones that would be fitting for a wedding ceremony. After they left, Mr. Anglo was very disturbed. He said those women were preparing us for a Serenade ceremony.

"What is that?" I asked.

"It is a function by which we are married to two women in the village," replied Mr. Anglo.

I was not at all disturbed like Mr. Anglo was. I felt that the whole drama was just a reception flavoured with an old tradition of the area. But to aggravate Mr. Anglo even more I told him:

"Anglo, how nice to make a second marriage."

He looked at me very surprised and asked whether I wasn't already married and wasn't I a father of three children?

"So what? They are all in Sri Lanka. Yours are in Manila. In our villages there is a saying that one must hammer the nail according to circumstances."

Saying this, I had a good bath, and dressed in my best suit and got ready for the Serenade ceremony. This suit was comprised of a long-sleeved white shirt called a *barong* that had been given to me in the Philippines and white long pants. I forced Mr. Anglo, too, to dress well.

Now the sound of sweet music filled the air. Somebody was singing a melodious song in the garden below. Mr. Anglo came to me shivering.

"What is the meaning of that song?" I asked him.

"It means," he said, "Bridegrooms! Open the doors and windows. The brides have come. Come down and receive them. Eat and drink with us and be merry." That is what they are saying. And I, of course, am not going to descend the steps.

I opened the windows and got Anglo to look down. Chairs had been placed in the garden below. A petromax lamp was lit, lighting up the place that had before been in total darkness. The whole village was there, including the Police chief, mayor, governor, state officers and community leaders. At the bottom of the steps, the two young women we already knew, stood again with garlands. I took hold of Anglo's hands and descended the steps, feeling utterly unembarrassed as I felt it was all make – believe. I had never stepped onto a *poruwa* (decorated wedding platform), even at my own wedding ceremony. But now I had to walk with my new bride and sit with her. Anglo did likewise, with great reluctance.

Next, we partook of the greatest delicacies found in Filipino villages. Then there was a pageant of folk song and dance. Following that came a dance, much like the Sri Lankan *lee-keli*, that involved two people holding two six-foot poles, tapping them together and people dancing in between them without trapping their feet. Even we had to take part in this dance. Amidst



Photo 371:
Tinkiling Dance

much applause, I performed this dance known as *tinkiling*, with much gusto.

Then all the guests departed. The time was about 10 pm. We climbed the steps, with the two women still holding onto us. Mr. Anglo was shivering and I, too, was feeling awkward now. This mental state increased as my bride led me into my room, and Mr. Anglo was led likewise to his. To avoid this awkward situation, I requested a cup of coffee and the woman went to the other room, called her friend and they went off to make coffee. Mr. Anglo was almost in tears. Stammering, he told me that he had a wife and six children and now he was trapped.

"Even I have a wife and three children. But let us not think too much," I said.

Not that I wasn't alarmed. Meanwhile, the women returned with the cups of coffee and all four of us sat in the drawing room and had the coffee. I cannot remember what we spoke about. Now it was almost 11 in the night. Both Mr. Anglo and I were determined to get rid of them.

Suddenly they got up, saluted us and said, "The Serenade ceremony is over. We are off. Good night!" Then they went down the steps and, with much relief, we said good night to them.

Petronila and Felicina had finally left us. The two of us now had a hearty laugh over the whole drama and finally fell asleep after midnight. The next day, the two young women who had role-played the previous night as brides came with their husbands and took us to a lecture at a school. The whole day we repeated the earlier program of lectures and receptions, and the next day we returned to Manila.

Here, too, we engaged in all the organised programmes and even on the last day, I spent two hours in a discussion at a women's organization and then in a discussion conducted by Radio Eastern Services. It was monitored by a Mr. Kenneth Silva. My last event in the Philippines was to be the Chief Guest at a meeting on Constitutional Reforms organized by the Manila Overseas Press Club. Fifteen members of the Constitutional Reforms Committee graced the occasion. I stressed in my speech the need to draft a constitution that would mete out justice to the proletariat or the lowest class in society who always form the majority proportion of the population of a country.

Born To Hunger

This is an excerpt from the Penguin publication published in 1968, "Born To Hunger" by Arthur Hoftcraft. It is included in this text to provide the reader an overview of the gradual development of the Sarvodaya Movement as perceived by a foreigner.

Some impressively vigorous labour is deployed in Ceylon quite separately from government supervision. The spontaneous gathering of this independent movement, in fact, provided the filip for the government service. The movement is called Sarvodaya Shramadana, and it is led with a fervour amounting to prophetic zeal by a tiny schoolmaster, Mr. Ariyaratne. I quoted him earlier on the subject of Ceylon's decline as an extended village in a pamphlet on the movement (it began in 1958). I think he bares his own nature down to the soul, as he gets close to that of a movement involving 110,000 people.

He gives the English translation of the essence of the movement as 'Donation of land, community ownership of land, donation of wealth, lifelong service to the community, a peace army, village self-government and service of humanity at large.' A programme like that leaves little time for rest, and Mr. Ariyaratne vibrates from head to foot to its call.

He took me to the Headquarters of Sarvodaya Shramadana, and following him throughout Colombo's traffic was like chasing a terrier through a football crowd. We arrived at a house next door to a little printing works at the end of an alley, went up the stairs after a few words with the family gathered in the living-room, and there found the single room from which the movement was administered. It was piled all over with the pamphlets and files, so that there was barely room to open out a couple of folding chairs.

From this mass of matter, Mr. Ariyaratne would pluck documents from time to time with sudden and unerring snatches. For a movement dedicated to the greatest good for the widest possible number it had all the appearances of a one-man band. That is, of course, very often the style of good works.

But this movement has solid achievement behind it. It began when a group of seventy five teachers and students set off on a kind of work-pilgrimage to one of the island's neglected villages, whose people were still suffering under the worst degradation of the caste system. There were then about 150 of these small communities of untouchables, living, miserable and ignored by the rest of the population. The intellectual is highly placed in the Ceylonese social order, so that this demonstrative adoption of the village was a startling gesture. The group settled in the village for a while, built a school and a handicrafts centre, helped improve the farming methods, sank wells and introduced the revelatory refinement of lavatories.

Since 1958 similar work has been undertaken in many parts of the island and unlike the Government's Shramadana service it has not been stimulated by food hand-out. The working parties usually take a supply of rice with them, but otherwise are fed largely by the villagers. Transport has been supplied free by helpers, although the movement once hired a train to lift 1,000 workers to one area.

In 1967, the movement had launched an ambitious programme to adopt a hundred villages for three years each. Sarvodaya Shramadana now had enough professionally trained men in its ranks, particularly those with medical and public health qualification to deploy well-balanced teams of specialists and labourers. There was a method and purpose to this programme. Each village was to be surveyed thoroughly, family by family, to discover its potential in terms of agricultural production and cottage industry, its need in schooling and health and sanitation facilities, and its capacity for influence in the surrounding district. Once the development work was under way, a cadre of young villagers in the ages of fourteen and thirty-five was to be trained to act as the local ginger group to keep the action going.

There was an exciting character to this movement. I did not see it matched in any other developing country I visited. The voluntary involvement of the educated, and the movement being strongly 'intellectual' in its number of teachers, senior students and Buddhist priests-in the lives of the poor is rarely seen in the Third World. This is mostly because the numbers of educated in these countries are insignificant, but sometimes because social conscience is one of the aspects of life which are under-developed.

In his pamphlet Mr. Ariyaratne asks whether the movement is 'the beginning of a total revolution in the reconstruction of man and society in our land? It is the sort of question which makes established politicians look to their defences. The movement is avowedly non-political, but it is an organized force and a growing one. In 1967, it was hoping to equip itself with a new headquarters a paid, full-time staff of field workers and half a dozen vehicles. I heard a note or two of disparagement and disapproval in some government quarters, as if the value of the work was being overshadowed by the gathering size of the organization. A previous prime minister gave the movement his blessing, with the wish that it would lead 'a social regeneration designed particularly to emancipate the less fortunate brethren of our country.' Emancipation, of course is what I was quite sure that Mr. Ariyaratne's motives were, clean of political or any other kind of personal ambition. He was an endearing figure, with a squeaky voice like a cracked clarinet and a manner which was all alarming acceleration and dead stop. He reminded me of the best kind of English class working activist, the impelled community, generator, vulgar and selfless, who cannot be touched by rebuff or ridicule. This was a rare spirit to meet in the claustrophobic disorder of Asia. I did not expect to leave on a note of effervescence.

Maathu Padan Namami (I Bow at My Mother's Feet)

Once, returning from Nalanda College, I stepped inside the Swabhasha Publishers at Maligakande Road, made the customary gesture and handed a part of my salary to Mrs. Maya Senanayake, the Managing Director, Swabhasha Publishers, to cover the expenses for the Sarvodaya newsletter. She accepted it, smiling and informed me, still smiling, that 15,000 rupees more was due. I told her I would somehow pay it and walked towards my House Under the Breadfruit Tree.



I was never in debt to anybody and somehow managed within my salary. Neetha was very economical and managed the household budget including our hospitality expenses very stringently. Many, however, asked me for little loans and these were often not returned. I usually forgot about them.

After lunch, consumed by the problem of how to pay the Sarvodaya newsletter debt, I lay down on my bed. At this time, my parents were living at our ancestral house at Unawatuna. One of them used to visit us once in a week or so. Just then, I heard my mother's voice. A mother is always sensitive to her child's cry and can diagnose why the child is crying. Then she takes immediate remedial measures.

My amma, too, was such a gem of a mother. But I never thought that she would still be aware of the agony of her 30 year-old child! Before I could get up from the bed to worship her, she kissed my face and remarked that my face was looking dark. Was there some issue?

"No," I lied, "no issue."

"No, no," She persisted, "there is an issue."

"It is useless telling you," I said.

"Why not? There is no problem that a mother cannot solve."

"But this is an issue of money that you cannot solve."

"I can solve it. How much is needed?"

"About 16,000 rupees."

"I can provide that. Wait. I will go home and come back." Then she added "You go and tell everybody to laugh. And you do that too until I return."

So saying, she went to Neetha.

We were not poor yet we were not rich either. How was Amma going to find that money? Would she take a loan? Would she sell something valuable? These questions began to bother me but my mother had spoken in such a confident way that I assumed that she had hoarded some money. The next day, she returned by the time I came back from school. Handing me an envelope, she said that inside was an amount that was thrice the money I needed. Inside the envelope was my Post Office Savings Bank book that mother had gotten for me in my childhood. I had been sending Rs. 200/- home monthly which she had deposited in this account, and because of the interest, a sum of Rs. 50,000/- had accumulated there.

I went to Punchi Borella that day, withdrew the money required, and handed the book back to Amma with the fervent wish that she may be re-born again and again as my mother.

The Plea to Become an Anagarika

One day Prof. G.P. Malalasekera rang me and requested me to meet him at his office at the National Higher Education Board where he was President from 1967 to 1971. It was at the beginning of 1971 that he summoned me. Prof. Malalasekera was a great patriot who I admired. His erudition was unsurpassed by anybody on the island and he was proficient in many languages including Sinhala, Pali, Sanskrit and English. Once he sat listening with his eyes closed to a lecture delivered by the President of the Pali Text society in English for one hour. He then got up and translated that entire speech into Sinhala without omitting a word. I had written down the English translation, and I was amazed at his retentive power and linguistic ability.



Photo 372:
Prof. G. P. Malalasekera

I can also remember him translating a speech made in Chinese by the Chinese Premier Chou En Lai. Both Chou En Lai and our Prime Minister, Mr. Bandaranaike, were astonished by his translation and asked whether he knew Chinese as no script had been handed to him before the speech. Saying he did not know any Chinese, he said that some sort of insight had helped him deliver the translated speech. He said that he really did not know how it had happened but perhaps insight superseded linguistic ability.

I had arranged to have the Professor address Nalanda students many times. He had been the first head of Nalanda, appointed by Mr. P. De S. Kularatne in 1926. In 1921, as a 20-year old medical student, Mr. Malalasekera had opted to do his London B.A as an external student. After that, he had joined the Ananda College staff and become its deputy in 1922. By 1925, he had obtained his M.A. and his Doctorate of



Photo 373:

Prof. Malalasekera with Mr. Wewela Kuruppu
at Meth Medura

Literature from London University. Then he headed Nalanda. Later, he went on to serve as a professor at Peradeniya University and also served as ambassador to many countries such as the Soviet Russia, Canada, Great Britain and even the UN. He was offered Honorary degrees from many countries. He also pioneered the World Buddhist Brotherhood Movement, a group representing the various Buddhist countries of the world. His work as the Chief Editor of the Buddhist Encyclopaedia remains unparalleled. The high point of his career was when he was appointed Chairman of the National Higher Education Commission, which later became the University Grants Commission.

Prof. Malalasekera received me warmly that day and expressed his deep concern over the deteriorating religious and ethical atmosphere of the country. He spoke of the work done by Anagarika Dharmapala. Then he praised the work of Sarvodaya as transcending all barriers of caste, creed and religion. He said that he was still getting invitations from various countries but economic factors prevented him from accepting these invitations. Then he said,

"Ariyaratne, be an Anagarika. Continue your work from where Anagarika Dharmapala stopped. I will give you the fullest support."

I told him that I was already married and had two sons and two daughters. The news surprised him.

"With such family responsibilities, how are you managing to do all this work?"

"Sir, my whole family helps me in my work. My salary as a teacher covers my expenses, but soon I will be quitting the school and investing my time fully in Sarvodaya work."

"Visit me with your family. I would like to see them."

But before I could fulfill his request, he had passed away.

Dassenena Sampanno

By the time I had passed the 40th milestone in my life, I had a very clear vision of my future activities. I was always of the belief that, more than intellect and reasoning, it was insight gained from the mental processes of my mind that led me to the correct path. Hence, certain decisions that I made along the way surprised not only those in my workplace but my elders as well. Perhaps they tolerated these decisions because of my deep commitment to the cause at hand or due to their affection towards me.

By this time, I had forsaken all opportunities to climb to the topmost rings in State Service. Not a shadow of a wish remained in me to join the privileged class and enjoy its plums. I also rejected the political party matrix of the country. Thus, I transcended the petty desire to be part of the power-hungry political network.

Would I relinquish all defilements, and take to a hermit's life and engage myself in meditation and Vipassana? No, I did not envision such spiritual purification.

The contemporary social structures are beset with injustice. The majority of people are shackled by economic and social constraints. Poverty engenders conflict, and the issues of caste, race, and religion become divisive factors that are generated by politics to aggravate the conflicts. Neither the State built on the edifice of politics nor an outdated bureaucracy can retrieve the country from such a condition. Further, neither the State nor the bureaucracy can act as a deterrent to such a conflict because of their clinging to stagnant beliefs and because of their lack of faith in the non-violent spirit of Buddhism. But Buddhist institutions are not being made use of due to the spiritual impoverishment that is destroying society.

After the Buddhist National Movement got sapped of its strength, I felt that Sarvodaya could fill its shoes. In my quest, the saviour of the nation, I was aware that there would be challenges - some inevitable, some unexpected. Hence, I had to equip myself with a philosophy.

What comprises the core of Sarvodaya philosophy? This stanza from the Karaniya Metta Sutta can be considered as the core:

“Dittincha Anupagamma Seelawa
Dasseṇa Sampanno”

This stanza talks about how one must work to eliminate one's 'ego' since it is that which divides men from men, and how one must be filled with a sense of discipline and endowed with a vision. I began to focus my attention toward this end as I engaged in the various welfare, developmental and educational projects of the Movement. As a result, I am at least aware of a possible path to peace and progress for Sri Lanka.

At the New Educational Conference held in New Delhi in 1959 where Prof. G. Ramachandran analysed the Sarvodaya philosophy, I visualized the creation of a Movement based on the Buddhist principles that could be acceptable to all segments of society. By 1961, I had committed to writing this philosophy. What I wrote later in several monographs was a mere elaboration of this with explanations of how to put the philosophy to action.

It is fitting to include a summary of this philosophy at the end of the first volume of my autobiography.

* * *

The philosophy of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement is not alien to Sri Lanka. It derives from the essence of the culture which has existed in our country for over 2000 years and which still continues to grow on our soil.

Since the introduction of Buddhism, the economic, social and spiritual life of our people has been fashioned according to the ideals of Buddhism. These ideals have not only sustained us spiritually but have acted as the code of discipline for lay life. The vil-

lage, the dagoba, and the tank became the emblems of our culture. Through Buddhism, the people became accustomed to a peaceful way of life, thriving on an economic system of stable equilibrium.

For hundreds of years, this system flourished. Then, it ruptured with foreign invasions. The main aim of these invaders who came and ruled us was economic exploitation, and they subtly introduced economic, political, social and administrative ideas prevalent in the West. Two harmful results were born out of these.

One was the collapse of the balanced indigenous economic system, and its replacement with the export-import economic matrix. The other was the breeding of competition and the consequent pollution of society, a result of the imposition of the imperialist economic system. Another side affect was the impoverishment of the rural class which constitutes 80% of our population.

The philosophy of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement has been formulated to conquer these evils and to found a society which will be enriched mentally, socially and economically. The Sarvodaya philosophy has relied upon the socio-economic traditions nurtured by the indigenous Buddhist culture. The only difference is that the Sarvodaya philosophical ideas have been adapted to fit the present complex society.

In the early part of the 1950s, the pioneers of the Sarvodaya Movement realized that, to reap the maximum benefits of the socio-economic and political changes sought by our leaders for the welfare of the underprivileged masses, the very participation of these masses is called for. Therefore, the Sarvodaya leaders, by aligning themselves with this segment, especially with the youth, have encouraged this Movement to realize the following very broad objectives:

1. While not transcending our own culture, we should build up the personality of our youth with full comprehension of the changes in the outlying world.
2. We should alert the villagers to social changes taking place and making them partners in this changing process, according to their own culture and needs.
3. We should provide opportunities to the public to understand fundamental human rights and social justice, and thereby

encourage them to play their own role in nation-building based on the concepts of truth, *ahimsa* (non-violence), and selflessness, for the inculcation of the collective spirit that supersedes all man-made divisive barriers.

4. We should provide an opportunity to establish coordination and brotherhood among the basic segments of society and establish rapport with people of other countries for the development of ideas and processes that ensure world peace.

The following sequences are included in the first stage of development of these ideas:

1. The welfare of everyone should to be the goal.
2. More attention should be focused on villages than on towns.
3. Villagers should be freed from unscientific thinking, blind beliefs and narrow mental processes.
4. These aims should be fulfilled by having a group spreading education among the villagers, sharing their toils and tribulations, and living and working amongst them with dedication.

The following are the factors that influenced these ideas:

- a. The thinking of Mahatma Gandhi, who dedicated his life to the welfare of the society, based on truth and *ahimsa*.
- b. The Bhoodan vision of Dr. Vinoba Bhave, the chief disciple of Mahatma Gandhi.

When reviewing the development of the Sarvodaya philosophy it is necessary to remember the following facts:

1. Though in its infant stage the Sarvodaya Movement was nurtured by the ideas and thoughts of Gandhi and Vinoba, later it formulated its own independent philosophy. Though we borrowed the word 'Sarvodaya' from India, when taking into account our Buddhist culture and our national characteristics, the word is really our own.

2. When the Sarvodaya philosophy was developing, it absorbed to a large extent, the essence of Buddhism and also took into account the Sinhala Buddhist culture implanted on our soil for 2500 years.

The following paragraph reflects the strong Buddhist philosophical basis of this movement:

Our absorption of the essence of the Buddhist philosophy which is our natural legacy was almost inevitable. Yet, we have attempted to present these ideals in a sequential way as commensurate with the ethical and spiritual ideals accepted on a world wide scale. To persuade youth to act as leaders of society we made use of the pure philosophy of Buddhism and its associated culture. According to Buddhism, the suffering of man is mainly due to man's disregard of the reality around him. The Buddha presented the Middle Path to rescue those who are suffering because of irrational and careless action and thought, and to bring them happiness.

As Sarvodaya grew and developed over four decades, its Buddhist philosophical basis became more solid. Simultaneously, the idea "that the noble qualities dormant in men should be invested for the welfare of everybody" became the focal point.

Through the ideas that underly the Sarvodaya or Sarva Udaya (welfare of everybody) there has been a focus on the present weaknesses of our society and an advocating of positive characteristics that we should develop instead.

Characteristics of The Present Society

1. Lacks self understanding and self confidence
2. Follows material values blindly
3. Adulates wealth, power, status, untruth, violence and selfishness
4. Allows institutions that stress rights and competition to become powerful. Capitalist economy, bureaucracy and power-politics become the chief social catalysts.
5. Results in the accumulation of human ills. Society is ruptured by race, caste, religion and political party friction.
6. Economic resources are misappropriated. Economy becomes weak and the problem of unemployment is aggravated.
7. The economy which is a legacy of the colonial era is marked by the production of commercial goods and the import-export system. Foreign loans engender neo-colonialism.
8. The people become cogs of mega-bodies whose major concerns are the accumulation of capital. There is exploitation of human labour, corruption, environmental pollution and other factors.
9. The village is dominated by the city. The drift is to the city, where moral degeneration and social tension are rampant.
10. The power of penal law, penal energy and state power increases. Dhamma law, Dhamma energy and popular power decline. The rulers become all powerful. People become weak.

Characteristics of Sarvodaya Social System

1. Works with self-confidence for self understanding
2. Is energised through spiritual mores based on indigenous culture.
3. Respects virtue, wisdom and ability. Truth, ahimsa and selflessness reign supreme.
4. Encourages organizations based on distribution and co-operation to become powerful. Economy is in the hands of society, people's power, shared administration and popular politics free from party divisions hold sway.
5. All virtues of man are centrally aggregated. The whole society assumes the form of one family.
6. Economic resources are pooled together. Production increases.
7. An economically independent nation is born, full of self-esteem and free from debts because of a self sufficient economy founded on fulfilling the basic needs of humans.
8. Micro organizations, simple devices to utilise human labour, reduction of corruption and protection from material, mental and environmental pollution is guaranteed.
9. The resuscitation of cities and villages and ethics takes place in a balanced way.
10. Dhamma law, dhamma energy and folk power emerge. There is no ruling strata. People become the all-powerful entity. Sarvodaya becomes a reality.

Six Sarvodaya objectives to orchestrate this change are listed below:

1. The blossoming of full human personality known as "Poorva Paurushodaya."
2. The blossoming of the family as the fundamental social unit. This is known as "Kutumbodaya."
3. The rural community or *praja* becomes the decision maker on issues influencing them culminating in a Gram Swaraj system known as "Gramodaya".
4. Urban communities and village communities focus on shared and collective progress, built on an ethical foundation known as "Nagarodaya."
5. Dhammadvipa granary objectives are realized, and are based on indigenous ethics known as "Deshodaya."
6. World peace is achieved via human brotherhood, co-operation and sharing of food known as "Vishvodaya."

Hence, the Sarvodaya objectives can be seen as revolutionary, destined to change the person and society without class, creed, religious and political divisions.

During the last four decades, Sarvodaya has produced a very clear litany of principles and processes to actualize each of these aims.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement has accepted as its guiding principles, the Four Brahma Vihara, from Buddhist philosophy:

1. *Metta* – Respecting life and having loving-kindness for all.
2. *Karuna* – Looking at the causes of suffering and employing various progressive measures to eliminate them.
3. *Muditha* – Witnessing the joy of others and being happy (Nissarana joy).
4. *Upekkha* – Developing equanimity and depth of thought, and facing the eight fold path courageously.

By the first principle, *metta*, an opportunity is provided for a person to regard everyone else as belonging to one common family. This paves the way for the removal of irrational obstacles

and divisions caused by the accumulation of wealth, by learning, caste, creed, race, colour or religion. Via such an approach a person begins to view others in the same way he or she views himself or herself. This principle implies action through thought. This approach should not be limited to humans alone, but should pervade the entire world and all living entities. This implies that the spread of *metta* should be to nature, too.

Karuna, the second principle, is *metta* in action. All processes that take place for the development and welfare of the society come under the umbrella of *karuna* according to Sarvodaya philosophy. This principle acts as a deterrent to the present ills in our society such as power-craziness, dissension and bickering, obstructing good work, bribery and corruption. When the orbit of compassionate action expands, it results in the preservation of natural resources such as trees, and leads to the eradication of the pernicious effects of environmental pollution.

Muditha, the third principle, is a happy mental state created in a person because of a kind action received by another person. It is sometimes referred to as “sympathetic joy.” It is a temporary state.

Upekkha or equanimity, the fourth principle, is a longer lasting state and develops into a balanced mind. *Upekkha* is acquired by experience and training. When the human mind gets filled with *upekkha*, a very stable condition results.

Sarvodaya is of the firm belief that a human being’s personality is the basis of every development process in society. How the *metta* principle enunciated in the Four-Fold Brahma viharana is practised by Sarvodaya workers can be gleaned from the following paragraph.

“We, bi-peds, wherever we live, are all of the human community. The greatest power of a human is the power of thinking



Photo 374:
Bhavana - A novice monk in
meditation

and the power of developing his or her mind. Humans with developed minds inevitably acquire a way of living that is pleasant and just. Without developing one's mind, if one tries to solve issues by words and deeds alone then turmoil and suffering result. Therefore, the Sarvodaya philosophy provides mental exercises to develop one's mind.

We engage in a series of five steps to support our mental environment with peace and harmony. At Sarvodaya, both personally and communally, we engage in *bhavana* (meditation) which not only reinforces our personality with a strong spiritual power, but releases such a power into the spiritual atmosphere in which we live.

Following are the aims of *Bhavana*:

1. To introduce a mental energy into our personality so that we will always be conscious of the link between our mind and body.
2. To control the mental energy encased in the emotions that, in dissipated fashion, wander all over the world, and to co-ordinate and focus this energy on one aim, to develop the mental ability and to make it an integral part of our personality.
3. To expand the mental energy thus conserved through *Maitri Bhavana* (meditation on loving-kindness).
4. To establish a universal communion between the beneficial mental abilities created within us and those of other humans and living entities, those visible and not visible.
5. To unleash a determination in us to perpetuate world peace and unity.

We engage in this five-fold mental training collectively, upon waking, before going to bed, and at Family Gatherings.



Photo 374.1:
Bhavana - A child demonstrates to adults a meditation posture



Photo 374.2:
Bhavana - Sarvodaya leaders in meditation

First Step – Sit relaxed with the spine and head erect. Keep the left hand on the right hand and relax the body. Close your eyes, then concentrate your mind on different parts of your body, from the toes to the head and from muscle to muscle and from organ to organ. Now your whole body is relaxed. A person who goes through this type of training daily can control his or her mind. We inevitably come to realize the strong connection that exists between the body and the mind.

Second Step – This involves the deliberate controlling of all dissipated thoughts. Here *Anapana Sathi Bhavana*, fundamental to all meditation, is very useful. In this meditation, we must pay attention to the inhaling and exhaling of our breath. This can be done by focusing on one's power of concentration. What is necessary is to control the running away of the mind. What you have to do is to concentrate on the tip of your nostril and on the process of the breath coming in and going out, and watch it mentally.

Third Step - To cultivate *maitri* (loving kindness) towards others, one must wish for the well-being of one's body, for the diminishing of avarice, foolishness and anger; and seek mental bliss. Then one must wish for the physical and mental well-being of all those near and dear such as parents, wife, husband, children, teachers, siblings, and relatives. Then we must develop compas-

sion for those we dislike, then to all strangers including those we have never seen. Now the orbit of loving kindness is encompassing the whole of humanity. Then it extends even to non-humans such as animals and birds.

Thus, as one's thoughts of loving kindness expand out to the whole world, a marked relaxation of the mind sets in. All people and all entities seem more pleasant than before. A strong confidence flows in you now. All those divisive factors manufactured by humans such as race, religion and politics appear untrue and hypocritical. The value of humanity and the power of the human mind become absorbed into one's mind.

Fourth Step - This is the hope that the energy developed in one's mind will develop in others' minds too, bolstering the positive energies already existing in those minds. One must pray that the energies of the god or gods one follows accumulate in one's own mind. And the mental energy that is developed when combined with other energies makes one's mind a part of a universal network of thought processes.

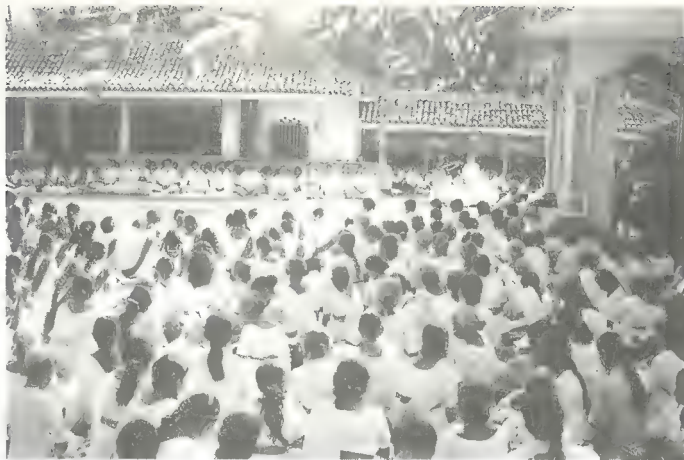


Photo 374.3:
Bhavana - Elders join in meditation



Photo 374.4:
Bhavana -
Leaders of four
main religions in
meditation

Photo 374.5:
Bhavana -
A mass peace
meditation in
progress



The world consists of good people as well as bad people. What we need is to release the beneficial mental energy released by good people into the atmosphere and strengthen it. That will make the others turn from bad actions and direct themselves towards good actions. Instead of spreading hatred, they will spread compassion and love. Instead of being miserly, they will be generous. Instead of distancing themselves from other humans, they will get closer to them.

Fifth step - The fifth step in this mental process involves the fervent hopes for national and world peace. Just let your mind dwell on our traditional “wishing verse,” so noble:

*“Kal vasi vaseeva - keth vathu sara vewa
Sath sith niveva - Rajaay dahamiva lovade vewa*

“Let rains pour down in the right time! Let fields and gardens be fertile! Let minds be tranquil! Let the rulers be good and virtuous and may they be a boon to the world!”

Does this hope have anything to do with any class division, caste, race, religion or party issue? No. It only prays for the preservation and enrichment of the environment, for the calming of the mind and for the well-being of all.

The people of the past who lived in our island, after worshipping at temples, bestowed merit on gods who enjoy a very resplendent life style. Merit was also conferred on *prethas* (hun-



Photo 374.6:
Sakman Bhavana - Walking meditation for peace

gry ghosts) and *bhoothas* (devils) who lead a less happy life. Except for a few who call themselves intellectuals, aping the West, most Lankans go to temples and kovils and follow this pattern of embracing everyone in the spread of *maitri*.

We believe that these thoughts of loving kindness which emanate from devotees enter the repository of the pristine white *chaitya* and transmit their luminence to another *chaitya*. Further, we believe that these thoughts enter the foliage of the Bo trees that Buddhists worship with great fervour and then via a kind of transmission of energy, spread to other trees.

Through this belief, we are cognizant of the value of foliage in our environment. Further, we believe that the positive thought processes of devotees in Hindu, Christian and Moslem places of worship also get released in a similar way into the atmosphere. Even good thoughts of those who do not follow a particular religion can transmit their goodness to the atmosphere.

Sarvodaya is of the belief that it is the spiritual environment collectively created by the different elements of a society that should be at the fount of activities leading towards national unity. However many other facets are complete, national unity will be unachievable until this basis is firmly established.

It is not sufficient to dictate to the State or to others that to remedy the present situation in the country such and such a step should be taken. Such a policy is futile. Many act on the premise of narrow actions that they think will benefit them alone, overlooking the traditional ethical bases.

What is the final outcome of this action? The plummeting of the total populace of the country into a psychologically, socially, economically and politically degenerated state, with pernicious effects on everybody. So, Sarvodaya is a better alternative to presenting solutions to the State and to others which concentrate on annihilating the basic causes responsible for the present conflict. Sarvodaya's belief is that the deteriorated spiritual state of our country has engendered aggressive actions. This cause can be eradicated only by building up a matrix of thought that would generate a *chittha samadhi* ("placid state of mind") developed through personal and collective training.

There are four other values that act as signals for *Kutumbodaya* or Family Awakening and *Vishvodaya* or Awakening of the World Community. These are the four-fold *Sangraha Vasthu* in Buddhist philosophy: Giving or Sharing (*dana*), Pleasant Speech, Economic Living, and Equality.

Dana

Shramadana is the sharing of one's time, labour, and thinking for well-being of society. *Buddhi dana* is the sharing of knowledge. *Shilpa dana* is the sharing of skills for the use of society. *Bhoomi dana* is the sharing of land. *Grama dana* is the sharing of resources in the village. *Vaidya dana* is the sharing of medical aid, nourishing food, medicines, first aid, clean water and sharing of knowledge of health matters. *Dhamma dana* is the sharing of spiritual knowledge required for self understanding.

Dana does not mean the mere sharing of material resources. Sharing all movable and immovable property, knowledge, land and labour are also included. Further, the equitable distribution of power in a society, too, can be termed *dana*. This involves a balanced inter-relation among members of that society. A phenome-

non noticeable in contemporary society is the accumulation of power by certain individuals in an imbalanced way. This power gets centralized with the very dangerous consequences of factional strife and the generation of various conflicting ideas. The equitable distribution of power creates a balanced society. Decentralization of power prevents it from being the exclusive prerogative of anyone and also prevents its misappropriation. Further, as equal opportunities are guaranteed to everyone, a light shines on the characteristic equality that should adorn a society. These facts apply to the economic sphere as well.

In the present social paradigm, the means of production are in the hands of a few, and this inevitably results in the exploitation of the have-nots. By *dana* is meant the amelioration of such unjust conditions. The ideal condition is where the whole society comes into ownership of all production.

Pleasant Speech

Sarvodaya interprets 'pleasant speech' in a broad way. According to Sarvodaya connotations, pleasant speech does not merely imply refraining from such things as harsh words, rumouring or lying. These certainly are abhorred, but Sarvodaya goes further and includes presentations to the public which the public cannot comprehend because of the use of incomprehensible words. Hence, Sarvodaya's action plans for public progress are couched in pleasant media such as songs. This is a technique which is completely different from the non-comprehensible speech usually used when the public is addressed.

Economic Stringency and Equality

These are also explained by Sarvodaya in terms which are compatible with indigenous mores and thought processes. When Sarvodaya analyses terms of Gramodaya and Grama Swaraj, it is always cognizant of the Seven Sustenance (or Regeneration) Truths. Through these Truths, society makes use of self-energy, collective action and streamlined processes, and the public develops the self-discipline required for progress. The rural community is not encouraged to attain the status of a consumerist social

class. Our final vision is one of spiritual, ethical, and cultural development replete with the fulfillment of basic human needs and collective needs, and controlled by the laws of nature, dhamma and just state law.

Sarvodaya has made a four-fold analysis of the following areas: – the degeneration of rural society, causes for degeneration, elimination of the degeneration, and a course of action. This is actually based on the *Chathurarya Satya*, the four-fold truth paradigm preached by Lord Buddha. While *Chathurarya Satya* aims at a person's liberation from Samsaric bonds, the Sarvodaya analysis is more geared towards world development and liberation.

According to this vision, the basic human needs are identified and techniques and structures to fulfill these needs are presented.

The concepts surrounding *Nagarodaya* (the awakening of urban communities) have been designed to fit the needs of the urban terrain.

To realize the aim of *Deshodaya* (the awakening of the spiritual, ethical, cultural, social, economic and political life of the nation), Sarvodaya highlights five aims. The path to *Deshodaya* is intertwined with the path to *Dhammadveepa* (the land of truth) and the development of granaries.

Path to Deshodaya

1. Resurrecting man's spiritual, ethical and cultural mores at all levels including the personal level, family, rural, urban and institutional levels.
2. Fulfilling the ten-fold basic human needs of all members of society, from the lowest rungs to the uppermost rungs.
3. Activating coordinated developmental education programs, bringing about the social development in the village and in urban communities through the following strategies:
 - (a) understanding the reality
 - (b) involving the community in decision-making.
 - (c) community organization
 - (d) community education

- (e) social equality
- (f) development of health
- (g) domestic co-ordination
- (h) actual achievement of basic human rights
- 4. Organising the country's political power paradigm on the following principles:
 - (a) establishing democratic institutions minus party politics
 - (b) decentralizing power to democratic institutions established in rural and urban areas
- 5. Re-organizing the national economy on following principles:
 - (a) achieving national self-sufficiency regarding basic human needs
 - (b) obtaining suitable mini technology in a decentralized way for production purposes
 - (c) transforming the present production arrangements to trustees who in no way practice exploitation
 - (d) being completely free from international bonds based on exploitation and progressing on Swasakthi (ones own energy) alone

Culture

What is culture? By culture, Sarvodaya means the internal plus external patterns a society develops as a totality including the organised structures of material resources, mechanism, technology, arts crafts, language and literature that the particular society utilises to fulfill its human and material needs.

Four features of Sri Lankan culture founded on the Buddha Dhamma can be identified as follows:

1. As humans, we had prior lives, too. The actions in those lives and past births have an effect on our present lives. There is a life after death, too. The acts done in our present birth will have an effect on our future births. So whatever we do will have a bearing not only in this world but in the future worlds, too. This was a belief entrenched in our culture.
2. We have to steer a middle path between the two extremes of

torturing our bodies and luxuriating. To enjoy Nirvana or that blessed freedom by the comprehension of Truth, a Middle Path should be followed. The aim of human life is not to satiate the five senses in an immoderate way. While fulfilling the basic needs of food, clothing, housing and health, moral development too must take place. The Buddhist culture values a simple life. To fulfill the needs of this simple life, *samma ajeeva* or “blemishless livelihoods” are needed.

3. Those professions that involve acts associated with the “Five sins” were never encouraged by our culture. For example: killing of animals, festivities that nourish lust, production of drugs and liquor, gambling – such acts were never encouraged by the indigenous forms of government that existed prior to colonialism.
4. Instead of dominating nature, what was predominant in our culture was a mechanism by which we shared the natural resources carefully and equitably. What do the present environmentally disastrous acts imply? They are enacted in the name of development and include such things as deforestation, clearing of mountain slopes, excess use of chemicals, and over confidence in macro projects. Now, instead of a sharing life style, we have fallen into the grips of a commercialised cultural paradigm which results in the destruction of nature.

Social Progress

According to Sarvodaya philosophy, the social progress of a country can be evaluated on the basis of eight features. Let us scrutinise each:

1. Each and every human is entitled to an education that leads to the full flowering of his or her personality that, in turn, leads to understanding of the self. Unfortunately, although much fuss is made about our formal educational system, one must admit that there are lapses in this system. As a result, our society seethes with members who are ever ready to indulge in anti-social acts to gain narrow ends. Most of

these are youths who are easy prey to anti-social trends that erupt from time to time. The fewer people with self-understanding, the more the possibility for social deterioration.

2. In any society, members should have a civic sense. That one cannot perceive the reality around us is generated by the lapses in the formal and in-formal education system. Mechanisms and techniques like community education and community development should be used to enlighten the public and to equip them with more social consciousness.
3. The decision-making potential of the community in spheres affecting their welfare has to be reckoned with. The decision-making power is a right inherent in a democratic society. Every government in post-independent Lanka has deprived the civic community of this right on some pretext. When tension crops up within the civic community, the only course of action has been to seek the long hand of State law. No leader can come to the forefront because politicians have blocked such an emergence of civil power and arrogated to themselves all decision-making. We continue to feel the ill effects of this dangerous phenomenon.
4. The organizational nature of any society is very significant. We wax eloquent on the *Gam Sabha* system that was prevalent during King Pandukabhaya's reign. Yet what is the civil power of a rural and urban community that is living at the so-called peak of democratic times? The right to place a cross next to the name of their choice of a representative (nominated by the central government) once in a number of years? It is a right that is exercised in a matter of seconds. It is no surprise that a segment of such a power-deprived community is trying to break away. Actually, the surprise could be that more and more religious and racial factions will imitate them in the future. The more the community is involved in the decision-making process, the more that community is developed. It is this background that makes Sarvodaya have as its ideal, the "*Gramswaraj*."
5. Social equality is very important. It is a concept that should not be introduced only by law, but a quality that should be

inculcated in the human personality via formal and all other forms of education.

6. The health of men and women is the parameter of judging the progress of that society. Despite the evolution of medical science and modes of health care, the average person here gets addicted to tablets and 'poisoned' food. Prevention is certainly better than cure. Remedy the above mentioned ills and the field of health too will be cured. Everything is inter-related.
7. Basic human rights and duties are a set of principles endorsed by every civilized community. Prior to colonial subjugation, we had a wonderful record of preserving human rights. Yet, we have been humiliated enough to listen to sermons on human rights by foreigners. Even in the UN, the human right issues in our country are being questioned.
8. Another criterion that measures the progress that a country has made is the extent of national unity and co-ordination. But the relations among the various races and religions have been damaged over the past years. Many have fallen into the habit of considering the issue of breaking up of Lanka as a political banshee cry. But there should arise a cry to divide the Island into two or three or four. If we reflect on this issue unemotionally and intensely, we perceive that while some may veer towards such action on chauvinistic grounds others are provoked to such an aggressive course purely by the need to live in safety and with human dignity. Here the question arises whether a person could enjoy the personal independence and self-expression in macro-institutions or in their own intimate civic circles. Sarvodaya feels that the unity and integrity of the country is ensured not by breaking the land into two or three but in decentralising it into about 24,000 units and constructing independent edifices socially, politically and economically. Here, the political concepts of *grama* (village) *swaraj*, *nagara* (urban) *swaraj*, and *praja* (civic) *swaraj* emerge. Never can this issue be resolved on the basis of power politics, race, caste, tribe and religion. For 42 years the Sarvodaya Movement has been carrying on

a clear social development scheme for affecting social progress. In 1980 and 1982 two Sarvodaya International Conferences were held to better highlight its aims and procedures. The venues were the Moratuwa Headquarters and Enskade in Netherlands. The following were the aims formulated at those conferences:

1. In keeping with the historical and cultural realism of each country, those alert and active should launch the building of the entities of Paurushodaya, Kutumbodaya, Gramodaya, Nagarodaya and Deshodaya and then go on to strengthen these.
2. On the basis of proximity and brotherhood, these persons and organizations should naturally exchange experience and aid.
3. They should accept the following conceptual procedures based on universal ethics:
 - a. To build a simple way of living.
 - b. To establish new techniques and structures for the exchange of production and consumerism.
 - c. To help each other to transcend the theoretical limits and political barriers.
4. To cooperate on endeavours to build up non-violent defence organizations and techniques while opposing aggressive methods.
5. To oppose production techniques which are practised anywhere in the world that lead to the pollution of nature and the environment and that create an imbalance in nature and mental and material impoverishment.

As the crises in the political and economic spheres in the world get aggravated, more and more attention has been paid to Sarvodaya philosophy. This has provided me a chance to address a number of International Conferences, elucidating Sarvodaya International principles and objectives.

Replacing the economic patterns now existent in Sri Lanka, Sarvodaya presents an alternate economic philosophy. What is at present meant by economic progress? It is the evaluation of

progress related to the speed by which the services fulfilling a populace's economic needs are fulfilled, the equitable distribution of these, and how entities such as land, labour, capital, enterprise and technology are utilised.

But Sarvodaya views a country's economic progress from a wider perspective. We ask: What is meant by a successful human life? What are the economic needs of such a life? Do we own the national resources to fulfill these needs?

When co-ordinating resources and needs, what type of technology would sustain us? How far should our resources be distributed to fulfill individual needs and general needs? What is the balance that has to be maintained between decentralised self-sufficiency and producing for a central market? How far and in what areas should relations be established with external economic structures? In our economic activities, what is the connection that is established with nature, with human society and with non-human society?

Sarvodaya's ideas encompass this vast field when talking of economy. Let us compare and contrast the Sarvodaya economic paradigm with the contemporary economic paradigm.

Characteristics of the Present Economic Paradigm:

1. It appeases the desires of humans.
2. It allows industrial societies to addict the average person to a life style that cannot be sustained by our economy.
3. It has absolute confidence in macro schemes, the most modern technologies, large capital investments and commercial enterprises.
4. It gives priority to production based on cash incomes and depends on these incomes to fulfill needs. The progress of a life style is measured proportionately.
5. Land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship, the four factors in economic production are considered the fundamental hypotheses.
6. It is based on the concept that everybody in society, after a certain age should receive an income, targets employment and makes all its plans accordingly.

7. It enjoins the Sri Lankan economy to international trade dominated by industrial countries dedicated to an export-import economy and to foreign loans, foreign management and foreign technology.
8. It paves the way for the core of village economies to be diverted to cities and foreign countries.
9. It transforms men into animals, trapped in a pernicious economic circle.
10. It makes a few individuals rich who then indulge in spend-thrift luxurious life styles while the majority drift into poverty and develop an aggressive attitude towards the former class.

Sarvodaya Economic Paradigm:

1. It concentrates on appeasing human needs.
2. It exerts itself to acclimatize the populace to a life style that takes into account the real spiritual, ethical and cultural influences and the outlying society.
3. It places confidence in mini projects, suitable industrial techniques, small scale capital investments and commercial infrastructures which are popularly controlled.
4. While giving priority to production aimed at needs fulfillment, it evaluates life-style not only proportionately but according to qualitative parameters.
5. It considers nature, the human, social resources, scientific technology and wisdom as the factors conducive to economic progress.
6. It plans based on the hypotheses that all humans should indulge in economic endeavours to fulfill their needs through *Samma Ajeeva* or 'correct' occupations.
7. It has a belief in establishing relations with foreign economies with self-respect, freed from alien economic grips after achieving self-awakening through faith in self-energy, indigenous resources, local savings, local capital investment, local industrial, local creativity, indigenous technology and national self-sufficiency.

8. It provides the ways and means of diverting wealth to rural economies and injecting vigour into the same.
9. It transforms men (and women) into relaxed individuals with job satisfaction.
10. It has the effect of transforming everybody into human beings who have fulfilled their human needs and created life styles which are satisfied, creative and simple, filled with culture.

In this way, some of the economic aims of Sarvodaya can be compared or contrasted with those prevailing in present times. Those privileged individuals who have distanced themselves away from the life and thinking of the masses and have formulated hypotheses based on democratic and socialist states that persist only in imagery vacuums, may find our objectives only amusing. What is the difference between us? The difference is that while their ideology is limited to words, we have put our ideas into practice and, even to some extent, our ideologies. There are many experiences we have gathered during the actual working out of this philosophy. A few are mentioned here:

The economic progress of a *praja* or civic community is closely linked to the development paradigms used. Hence, the following can be listed as the major steps in economic re-awakening marked by popular participation, which we have launched.

- * Establishing a psychological foundation in the community via shramadana.
- * Focusing on national needs and conducting shramadana camps to consistently fulfill these needs.
- * Organizing the Praja civic mind through social gatherings and sustaining them through addressing their needs.
- * Paving the way for the indigenous and collective leadership emerging out of the village and nurturing them through further training in leadership.
- * Giving skills training, taking into accounting the needs and level of the development stage of village.

- * Devising a path to find the necessary capital without recourse to middle-men, through mechanisms such as savings and loan schemes.
- * Making use of common markets, collective economic projects and rural development banks to ensure economic independence.

The Sarvodaya economic policy will develop into an independent group economic system once the national economic policies and national political policies are changed accordingly. Until then, we remain active and go on establishing strong and viable economic bases in the villages in which we work.

In the context of economic development, again, the following factors are significant:

- * Efficient production
- * Protection of the products
- * Non-destruction of basic resources
- * Insurance of the humanness of the social environment in which production takes place.

Our economic advancement should be orchestrated to ward off the following distinguishing features of the ongoing malaise:

- * environmental pollution
- * environmental imbalance
- * disruption of family life
- * accentuating of polarisation between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'
- * aggravation of mental disorders
- * increase of crime and deaths from accidents
- * food-poisoning and infectious diseases

Politics

In order for Sarvodaya workers to evaluate their progress, it is important to reflect on our development. Sarvodaya is not affiliated with any party or power-crazy politics. It has a clear ideology with regard to political development.

Many ask us to which political party we belong. Some do not believe that we steer clear of party politics. They may also ask,

“why do you support such and such a programme of the government then?” When a government is elected to power and begins to launch certain welfare measures for the public good, we always support them but not because of party-affiliation. This is a stand which the opposition parties are usually reluctant to accept.

The next question arises about whether Sarvodaya is not hankering to get power into their own hands. When we answer that we are striving to repudiate the thirst for power, they fail to understand that. Besides our rejection of party and power-crazy politics, they also find it difficult to comprehend that Sarvodaya has placed trust in a political framework that targets the general public's welfare and is of a socialist participatory nature.

This is due to the imperialist mind set that has been ingrained in these party politicians. Due to this mind set, whether they are Marxists, liberals, capitalists, opportunists or any other theorists, they will always view Sarvodaya via the colours of their spectacles. We extend our sympathy to those segments who work under the various labels of capitalist, imperialist and other “issues.” It is the lust for power that has blinded them. Understanding Sarvodaya will only be possible when the idea of serving the public for that sake alone inspires them to look at us in a true way.

During the last 42 years, motivated by the ideas above, many have tried to harm us overtly and covertly. Even ministers of the present government have followed this policy and I mention this with pity for them. We close our doors to party politics and power-hunger, and we declare that they cannot stop our onward march.

What then does Sarvodaya mean by political development? Politics is nothing new to civilized society, especially to a country like Sri Lanka. A political ideology based on Buddhism flourished for a long time in our country. That ideology never led to the breeding of hypocrites. It helped them with the flowering of their own personality and helped them to build a *Kutumbodaya*, *Gramodaya*, *Gram Swaraj*, *Nagarodaya* and *Deshodaya*. In other words, our ancient generations had the experience of serving the society politically without contaminating their personalities.

The Sri Lankan society was replete with great political traditions that consisted of a beneficent monarchy, a sangha society of monks and a peaceful community. Having rejected all these ethics and techniques of the past, we have focused our attention on the so-called democratic or socialist traditions of the West.

That is where we erred. When the British handed over the country to us, the biggest mistake we made was to accept wholesale the political and economic strategies they had developed to suit their own history and environment.

It is time to recognise that foolishness now, for if we do not correct ourselves at this late stage, our past and future are doomed. This understanding makes Sarvodaya reject the political philosophy of parties and those who are power-hungry, and that which has permeated our culture from the West. Also, we must reject the economic philosophy based on personal ownership and competition.

Then, is Sarvodaya devoid of the craving for political power? Is the Sarvodaya Movement completely divorced from politics? We have to answer these questions in the following way. Sarvodaya expects progress in the political arena as well in other arenas. Therefore Sarvodaya is also imbued with a political philosophy.

The difference between Sarvodaya politics and party politics is given below.

Party Political Milieu

1. Aims at gaining power for a particular party.
2. Has as its objective, the welfare of the majority of the party followers.
3. Is not opposed to using lies, violence and self-adulation to gain ends.
4. Has faith in centralised power.
5. Uses legal power and penal power derived from brute strength as the main tools.
6. When planning development strategies, focuses more on the next elections than on indigenous ethics and long term national revival.

7. Considers understanding of the Praja (civic community) and popular participation as enemies of party power.
8. Creates dissension among the public.
9. Follows a two-faced policy with regard to public life and private life.
10. If not detrimental to the party endorses as bribery, dishonesty, corruption, inefficiency, violence.
11. Focuses on material objectives while confining spiritual development to personal life.

Sarvodaya Political Approach:

1. Aims at handing over the power taken by political parties from the public, back to the public.
2. Focuses particularly on the welfare of those living in extreme poverty and hardships and generally on the welfare of the total public.
3. Attempts to change society via services based on the fundamentals of truth, non-violence and selflessness.
4. Places trust in the self-ruling ability of decentralised rural and urban communities or Praja Swaraj.
5. Regards Dhamma power and Janatha Shakthi (People's Power) as the main tools.
6. Always takes into account indigenous ethics for long term national revival.
7. Regards, understanding of the people and popular participation as core strategies
8. Integrates the public into one family.
9. Regards private life and public life as two sides of the same coin.
10. Looks down on all acts detrimental to the public.
11. Encourages open dialogue in all situations.
12. Has the full awakening of the person and the society as the goal, spiritually as well as nationally.

So the difference between the two milieu is obvious. Then what is the political creativity that can be offered by Sarvodaya?

1. To demonstrate to those indulging in party politics, the utter futility of their exercise and the harm caused to society, and to get their attention to consider a political system without parties.
2. To highlight the protection of the environment and the giving of service devoid of party affiliations, and to moderate the vehement hatred, disunity and aggression now prevalent among different groups.
3. To build up a climate devoid of the hatred engendered by party politics among different communities. This can be done by bringing small rural and urban entities together through spiritual, ethical and cultural means into a common front and then directing them to the fulfillment of the 10-fold basic needs.
4. To bring about changes in the social and economic structure through self-energy, co-ordination and Praja organizations and then to build the Gramodaya, Nagarodaya, Grama Swaraj, and Nagara Swaraj structures. A practical demonstration of such a process is necessary along with a demonstration of the possibility of activating a popular participatory democratic village or urban administrative system that has no need for political parties.
5. To inculcate in the minds of intelligent and patriotic leaders that, since the majority of Sri Lankans live in the rural social environment, the democratic Grama Swaraj system can develop into a popular participatory system.

This five-fold process comprises the Sarvodaya political milieu. There are no elections, no bitter struggles for political plums, no hatred engendered. All parties are viewed with equanimity. That is the development politics of Sarvodaya.

Since this process opposes the basic hypothesis of all contemporary political parties, the question arises as to how successful such an approach plan could be. The answer to this question is based on a sociological hypothesis that puts faith in the innate intelligence of the average person and the conscience of political leaders. We should derive our energy from faith in our own work.

How should we behave with the politicians who are at loggerheads with us? If we are confident that we are blemishless, their criticisms, instead of discouraging us, should only encourage us. When we work within the framework of ethics and state law, the spears aimed at us will pierce them back. Minimal energy should be used to work against them but should be focused more and more on changing the faulty social fabric that has led them astray.

There are party politicians who have sympathy with our philosophy. They are quite alert to our attempts to generate a political system without indulging in power-hungry politics. If we are successful, they are sure to accept us.

This volume only includes the techniques and organizational structures worked out on the basis of Sarvodaya philosophy. The second, third, fourth and fifth volumes will elaborate and provide a more complete understanding of the entire structure through self energy, co-ordination, and *praja* (civic) organizations.

The first volume of my autobiography which surrounds incidents of the first forty years of my life, thus draws to a close.



Postscript

This “Bhava Thanha” is the most ambitious autobiography I have ever read. Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne has commenced to write it in 1976 and has been at it for 24 years, while indulging in a myriad other activities. I consider it an honour to have been invited to write a postscript for this first volume.

Very experienced writers such as Gunadasa Liyanage, Lal Premnath De Mel, Premil Ratnayake and even Dr. Ediriweera Sarachchandra have touched on Dr. Ariyaratne’s biography. Prof. Nandasena Ratnapala has written the foreword to this volume.

The challenge given to me has made me at last enter the queue of those who describe the life of a noble man dedicated to service to humanity armed with a social, economic and political philosophy of his own, and full of human compassion.

It took me three weeks to read this autobiography of Dr. Ariyaratne, who has been inspired by the philosophies of world luminaries such as Gautama Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Vinoba Bhave. Its impact on me cannot adequately be put into words. At times the story was heartening at times the tears it drew clouded my eyes and made further reading impossible.

This cumulative anecdote of the stupendous dedication of not only Dr. Ariyaratne but his wife Neetha and their children to the cause, as well as the local and universal adulation given for all the work the Sarvodaya leader has done, instilled in me feelings of sorrow and joy. I even sobbed out loud at times, unable to control myself as I went on reading it.



Photo 375

Prof. Chandra Wickramagamage

I must say that this volume not only cemented but nourished the deep love that had been already engendered within me for Dr. Ariyaratne.

Prof. S.H.P. Nanayakkara is an indispensable doctor for the people in and around Colombo. His very sight evaporates the fear women have in the episode of child birth. To Neetha, Mrs. Ariyaratne, her husband's absence was amply filled by Prof. Nanayakkara's presence. He not only looked after her but paid the hospital bills and took her and the child to their home, while Dr. Ariyaratne worked in Sarvodaya camps. This is the story of selflessness he narrates with relish. *

What is selflessness? It is the dispensation of self, the last and most detrimental bond of the three entities of I, mine and self. In the Mulapariyaya Sutta of Majjima Nikaya, it states that these three entities are basic to all Dhamma. The above mentioned instance demonstrates that Dr. Ariyaratne not only conquered 'self' but the concept of 'I' and 'Mine' too. Many illustrations of his nature abound in this autobiography.

Anyone who is inexorably bound to those three entities cannot participate in a service such as Sarvodaya.

The autobiography 'Bhava Thanha' places before us an ideology and procedures that run through the history and a sequence of events orchestrated in this country over about 50 years.

The path taken by Dr. Ariyaratne, along with his philosophy, can be utilised to retrieve the country from the dark depths into it has fallen due to power politics. These power politics have become entrenched in family power but have not solved the country's problems; they have annihilated democracy along the way. The power paradigm should go. Family power should be ended. Ethnic differences should cease. In a democratic state, sovereignty should rest with the people, and they should have the power to execute it, too.

When the voter, invested with sovereignty, is forced to give his vote to one decided by the party leader, he loses his right to elect the person he feels is most intelligent, efficient, civilised and humanitarian. This implies the necessity of a scenario in which party and family affiliations do not act as an influence on the

voter's mind. In such an atmosphere, anyone can come forward as a candidate. The voter will also get a chance to send to Parliament men and women of their choice. If this system can work out, even the ethnic conflict can be resolved. Dr. Ariyaratne is well equipped with a philosophy to lead the way for such a political system to emerge.

Dr. Ariyaratne has fully comprehended the Buddhist economic ideology and has shown both nationally and internationally, the significance of transforming that ideology into action. The speciality of this economic philosophy rests on the thinking leading to the oscillation between demand and supply.

Appeasement of desires is a procedure that is pregnant with fearful consequences. But the above philosophy does not lead to such a condition. It ensures the economic reality of simple needs, conservation of resources (as opposed to destruction of resources) and the decrease of crime. In this economic system is implied *alpechchathawa* (hankering after simple needs), a basic economic principle of Buddhist teachings.

I have no qualms in pronouncing Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne to be the most suitable Sri Lankan endowed with the dedication, experience and philosophy to show the correct path to politicians who, though desirous of the country's welfare, are missing a political and economic philosophy of their own.

Prof. Chandra Wickremagamage

Sri Jayawardenepura University

Gangodawila, Nugegoda

27.08.2000

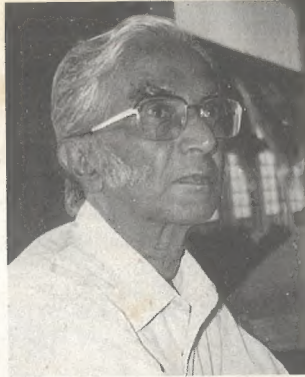
Merit is bestowed to:

- * My parents who fed me not only with food but with virtues.
- * To all elders, all Venerable Bhikkus and all my teachers, who have not been mentioned by name in this text.
- * To all old and young, some living, some dead, who helped to build up the Sarvodaya Movement from 1956 to 1971.
- * To critics who showed my faults, obstructed my work and provided a catalyst for me to work with added strength while developing *upekkha* (equanimity) within me.
- * To all those inhabiting urban and rural terrain, who placed implicit trust in me and helped me to actualize my dreams.
- * To Prof. Nandasena Ratnapala and Prof. Chandra Wickremagamage who wrote the Foreword and Postscript respectively. Prof. Ratnapala helped in the proof-reading as well.
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- * To Mr. Dharma Gunasinghe, Mr. Dharmasena Senanayake, Mr. Cyril Ekanayake and to my wife Neetha Dhammachari for reviving my memory of forgotten episodes.
- * To Mr. Susiri de Silva and others of Vishva Lekha for encouraging me in the publication of this work.

I solicit the aid of all of you in putting out the subsequent volumes.

A. T. Ariyaratne

Photo 376
Those who wrote my biography



Prof. Ediriweera Sarachchandra



Mr. Gunadasa Liyanage



Prof. Nandasena Ratnapala



Mr. Lal Premanath de Mel



Mr. Premil Ratnayake



Photo 377:

My wife and children who dedicated their humble efforts for the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in 1970
 (from left to right) Vinya, myself, Neetha - my beloved wife, Nimna - my youngest daughter, Jeevan, Charika, Sadeewa and
 Diyath - my youngest son.

Bhava Thanha, the story of A.T. Ariyaratne's life, is touching, interesting, amusing and impressive.

The Founder and President of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement has quite possibly greeted millions of people personally, and he seems to remember every name and incident. For the untold others who have heard him speak and seen the enduring legacy of his work, this book offers insights into both the character and the wisdom of the man. His insistence on trusting the will of common people is legendary, and his honest observations of history and personalities make fascinating reading.

His scholarship on Buddhist thought takes clear shape in these pages, as do the roots of the Sarvodaya Movement. Equally important, the story of the formative years of Ariyaratne's life reveals the people, incidents and experiences that influenced his thinking and actions. Admitting his imperfections, A.T. Ariyaratne also knows his strengths and knows they are interdependent with the strengths of others. This is a leader with a full life, whose indomitable will and drive have given spiritual sustenance and energy "for the awakening of all."

Richard S. Brooks

University of Wisconsin - Madison

For years, I wanted to write Ari's life story. However, no one could have written it as beautifully as he has done himself. You will hear Ari's voice in these pages. You will find yourself touched by the humor and sadness of the events of his remarkable life! And, you will understand how these events are intimately connected to and interwoven with the philosophical, moral, and practical ideas that have made Ari and his Sarvodaya Movement as important to the world as they are. I love reading this book for it reminded me of why I love and respect Ari and why he and the contributions he has made to the world must be remembered.

Pat Masters,

Honolulu, Hawaii

A. T. Ariyaratne

A word of felicitation

As a leader of men, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne has totally possessed and inspired the mass - mind. He has achieved the stature of an unusual individual, who elevated the gentle light of humanity, into a global force. Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, unified the village, the city and the world, through the enduring bond of service to fellow - man. He saw those men and women, who helplessly caught in the grip of the vicious aspects of technology, were entangled in perverse and destructive value - systems. They were once again led back to the wholesome path of friendly co-existence, ushering in the dawn of a new-era of human co-operation. Emerging from a village in the deep south of Sri Lanka, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, in effect, transformed the whole world into his village.

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne's humane philosophy is a wake-up call for modern man. While being honoured and esteemed at global level, he has achieved a personality triumph by perpetually remaining simple and clean.

His profound autobiography is a vade-mecum for all those, who set out on an odyssey to discover authentic human values, which are fast eroding in the miasma of insensitive cynicism. It is my considered view, that, both adult and young generations, will devoutly utilize this autobiography as a road - map to charter their path in the increasingly difficult journey of life.

Kalakeerthi **Edwin Ariyadasa**



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BHAVA THANHA

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